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*Mark Watson*









Paul Spencer—  
From The Author

A TOUR  
TWENTY YEARS AGO.











1. *M'Diarmid.*

2. *Lord Lodbrog.*

3. *Mr. Darwin.*

4. *Mr. X—.*

5. *Mr. Digwell.*

6. *Eyrik's Jokul.*



A TOUR  
TWENTY YEARS AGO.

BY UMBRA.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY F. SHOBERL, 37, DEAN STREET, SOHO, W.

1863.



## TOUR TWENTY YEARS AGO.

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### CHAPTER I.

ONE summer evening, twenty years ago, our party sate on the hummocks through which crawled a twisting brook. The setting sun was streaming with intense yellow lustre on the grassy plain that stretched far, far away. Snowy hills, one hundred miles distant from one another, made themselves clearly visible through the diaphanous ether. Close to us, and to and fro, paced cattle such as Claude Lorraine or Poussin might have placed in the foreground of their pictures; but one additional feature was here, which neither Claude nor Poussin ever dreamed of inserting in a landscape. From the ground rose bursts of steam, such as are seen to issue from factories in crowded manufacturing towns; and the cattle, as they occasionally walked through the intervening vapour, loomed large, assuming a strange, weird, unnatural aspect. Yet was there no house or shieling near, and these jets of steam rose not from any subterranean smithies, or work of inventive man. These were the hot springs of Reykjavik—time, ten o'clock at night—summer in Iceland. We were a party of six—twenty years ago—but through that space my memory reverts, and brings to me all distinct as though it happened but yesterday. Again I breathe the pure fresh air, again I seem to know the tent my home, my plaid as my

bed, and my saddle for a pillow. I look at our ponies feeding, and I take hold of the curiously carved wooden ask, brought from a neighbouring farm, brimming full of milk, which, however, I do not myself like; and again I hear the frequent laugh, the merry jest of those comrades. But let me present them:

First—he who by tacit consent was reckoned the head of our party, was surnamed Archibald M'Diarmid. I believe the addition of Esquire is considered a sort of insult in the Highlands, whence he came, so I omit it. M'Diarmid, like Chrichton, did all things well, being a first-rate sportsman, a good draughtsman, was a follower of Science, and an author to boot. He possessed qualities of coolness, deliberation, and courage, that would have fitted him to be the leader of a party bound on an expedition far more adventurous than our own. He was, moreover, a pleasant companion, but, lest it should be thought that I am describing a too perfect character, I will admit that he cherished two superstitions: first, he believed in Ossian; secondly, he held it as an article of faith, not to be doubted, that his tent was completely waterproof.

Next to him I will introduce Mr. Darwin, a really celebrated personage. He had written a learned book on Northern Antiquities, in recompense of which a Scandinavian potentate created him a Knight of the second class of the Order of the Walrus, the riband of which illustrious Order was suspended across his brawny shoulders. Of Herculean height and strength, with his long black beard descending to his waist, he resembled a Viking of old, and such I conceive he at times supposed himself to be. In fact, so deeply was he imbued with the spirit of antiquity, that a continual antagonism between the past and the present, or rather, I should say, between the imaginary and the real, existed in his breast. He was two gentlemen at once. Though a sincerely religious man, still I cannot help suspecting that in



his heart of hearts he looked on Christianity as a somewhat parvenu creed, and deemed that Thor, Odin, Freya, &c., were the proper objects of worship. In dull fact he was an excellent citizen, a householder, paying rates and taxes, an affectionate husband, and the good father of a family; but in the dream, the fancy—"the spirit, Master Shallow"—he was a Berserker, a Norse Pirate, ploughing the seas in his dragon-beaked barque, making his trusty falchion ring on the casques of his enemies, slaying, pillaging, burning, ravishing, and thus gratifying a laudable taste for adventure. I fear he preferred the glorious dream to the sober reality. I think he inwardly pined at his own respectability, that he considered himself misplaced in the narrow sphere of duties; but he was a most agreeable comrade, and till the fatal end.....

Third was Regner, Lord Lodbrog, an Irish Peer, and then a student at the University. He derived his descent from a chieftain of that name, who had slain a dragon, after encasing himself in impenetrable hairy breeches, and it was still a custom in his family, out of respect to this ancestor, to wear hirsute nether garments. How gay was Lodbrog! the life and soul of our company—his cheerfulness never failed. As he cantered on ahead of all, "*cum spumantis equi fodcret calcaribus armos*," a crimson sash round his waist, the plumage of the wild swan in his cap, and round his shoulders slung a horn, which had erst, to the great disgust of the Dons, awoke the echoes of Peckwater Quad, he was hailed by us as decidedly the "Skarzmadrur" or Dandy of the Party,

Fourth was Mr. X——, a Member of Parliament, who had come out late in the Session. I am not aware that he ever enlightened the Senate by his eloquence. He was rather a silent, reserved person, and his chief talent seemed to consist in smoking tobacco. However, to do him justice, he was always good tempered, lent a willing hand at the packing in the morning, and never bored any of us by quoting

blue-books, which is much to his credit. When he did speak, it was generally to make some citation from the classics or Shakespeare, which was tedious but happily brief.

Fifth was Mr. Digwell, a relative of Mr. Darwin, fellow of a College at Cambridge, and unfortunately for him smitten with a taste for Geology, which had impelled him to come to Iceland. He was a tall, thin man, and always carried a hammer to aid him in his favourite pursuit. He also brought an ancient military saddle, which an ancestor of his had used in the Duke of Marlborough's campaigns. On an Iceland pony it seemed somewhat misplaced. Besides his zeal for science, Digwell was passionately fond of poetry, and for hours together would repeat verses, embodying the mysterious longings of the soul. Unluckily Nature had endowed him with another craving, entirely opposed to romance; namely, a most inordinate appetite. He left his hall at Cambridge where the table groaned beneath ample joints, he left the pleasant Common Room and its delicacies, to come to the barren regions where even bread is an unknown luxury, for no grain will ripen in Iceland. Never was there a more signal refutation of the fallacy of that impostor, Goldsmith's Hermit, that "man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long," for Digwell wanted a great deal, and wanted it a long time without getting it. All that he must have suffered to the end can never be known. Poor, poor Digwell!

Sixth, and last, came I, Umbra, the historian of this journey. Of myself little can be said: I was called to the Bar, and have no doubt whatever that I should have become Lord Chancellor if I had ever had a brief given me, but I never had—"c'est le premier pas qui coute." I could not invent briefs. In the meanwhile, I had settled down to be a constant attendant at my Club, and bid fair to become what the youngsters call a "Fogey" or an "Institution." My chief diversion had hitherto been to

travel in the South, and thither was I again bound, but was checked by two considerations. Either I must have proceeded through Switzerland, which I knew by heart, and was sick of meeting gentlemen carrying Alpenstoeks engraved with the names of mountains which they had never been up, or else I must have gone up the old Rhine, and my soul loathed the recollection of the steamboat, the two o'clock dinner, the gormandising tourists occupying the whole deck, jumping up occasionally to look at St. Goar and the Lurleyberg, and then, satisfied with such passing glimpses of spots renowned in legend and in song, resuming their meal. While in this state of indecision, my friend M'Diarmid met me at the Club, and said "Come with us to Iceland." This was new, this was original, unexplored ground, so I came.

And this was our first day in Iceland, and we had gone to bathe in the hot springs some three miles from the town, and after our bath were reposing on the grass.

"Behold," said Darwin, pointing to the south-west, "the giant Snaefell, the snowy hill, so named by Nadd-Oddo the first discoverer of Iceland. He came and departed. Gardar was the second who came, but he made no settlement, and the existence of the isle was doubted by another generation. Then Floki sailed in his galley from Faroë, and took with him three crows, which he let loose at different times in his voyage; the two first winged back their way to Faroë, but the third flew north, and the mariners, taking the instinct of the bird for their guide, pursued their course and made the land. It was Floki who gave the isle its present name, but Ingolf was the first colonist. He consulted the Orale, and was told that Iceland was reserved for him and his posterity. Then embarked he with his daughter Helga, and his son-in-law Leisus, surnamed Hiorleif, the Knight of the Sword, which he stole in Ireland and killed the owner; and they placed all their booty on

board, and came and remained. This was in the year when Edmund the Martyr, the Saxon king of England, was slain and interred at Bury. But it is getting late, so let us return to Reykjavik."

Differing as we did in years and other respects, it was wonderful what a harmonious party we proved. We never quarrelled, we never sulked, nor do I remember one passing cloud till the sad, sad catastrophe. Of us it might be said, in the words of the poet,

"We were a gallant company;"

and the succeeding verses were literally true of us—

"We forded the river, we clomb the high hill,  
Never a day our steeds stood still."

I have not made up my mind whether I shall print this or not, but if I do, if I catch a reader, then, O Reader, whom I scorn to flatter by the claptrap compliments of gentle or courteous—no, I rather choose to address thee as miserable and unhappy Being—whether thou beest some weatherbound traveller at a country inn, and, tired of watching the raindrops trickle down the window panes, takest up this as a last resource, or whether thou beest some disappointed damsel compelled to stay alone at home because it is your sister's turn to go out, and Lady Wayward Savage would not ask two to her ball. Unknown and mysterious creature, Reader, I say, know this, be well assured of one thing, that truth, sacred truth, guides my pen, and all that is here related is matter-of-fact history. Why was Othello plunged into horrible misfortune? I have my own theory on the subject. It was because he did not adhere to the truth. It was well for him to discourse to Desdemona of Cannibals and Anthropophagi, if she cared to hear of such people; but when he gravely assured that fair, unsuspecting creature that he had seen men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders, by this wilful departure from truth, by this monstrous

fabrication, he no doubt incurred the penalties of avenging Nemesis. Conceive such a man dining out in Venice and telling these traveller's stories over his wine! Moreover, I remember that Darwin once said that to tell a Saga wrong was reckoned a great offence against public morality! Therefore, O Reader, place implicit faith in my narrative.

O Critic, before whom unwhipped authors tremble, I care not for thee—why should Umbra care? Thou canst not lash a shade—as well might'st thou carve the impalpable and viewless air with thy trenchant paper knife. I mock myself of thee, as our ally Grioles said he mocked himself of Thomson the Dane.

Boot and saddle!—to horse! to horse!—let us be off! Sound thy horn, Regner! sound it loud and blaring through the street of Reykjavik! After some delay, our ponies are bought, paid for, and shod. The luggage is at last packed, the guides are mounted, and the cavaleade is ready to start. Forwards!—march! Sound thy horn, Regner! sound it yet again! The echo falls through all the intervening time not unpleasantly on my ear.

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## CHAPTER II.

“HALT!” cried Darwin, who already knew the ground; and we halted.

Sheer below us lay Thingvalla.

I was not astonished—not at all—though perhaps the most remarkable spot in the world was beneath my feet, but I had been so sedulously instructed that I was to be surprised, that the foretold sensation could not take effect; a surprise expected cannot be a surprise.

Since our time Lord Dufferin visited the place, and has written a good account of it in his amusing

book "Letters from High Latitudes." As he observes, the whole district has fallen—sunk down—the space between the two opposite eminences being some five miles wide.

We rode down a steep track between the main wall of lava and a mighty fragment rent from its side. I was puzzled to think of what it reminded me, till the solution came. Take a honeycomb and break off a large slice, which falls to one side, but still cleaves at bottom to the main comb, magnify it through an intellectual microscope, and it may give some idea of the broken, porous, lava cliffs of Thingvalla.

The Gia, or space between the main cliff and the broken off portion, is beautifully clothed with turf. It extends two miles in length. A river—the Auxara—which hurtles over the brow of the hill at one extremity, flows through a portion of the Gia, bubbling over gigantic slabs of lava, till at the Wicked Woman's Pool, it quits the narrow Gia, and flows tranquilly through an open plain to Thingvalla lake. We ford the river, and in the Churchyard pitch our tent.

After refreshing ourselves with a bathe, we proceeded, under the guidance of Darwin, to the Parliament Hill—verily a singular place for a Legislature to meet—a long narrow peninsula of lava surrounded by water, which on one side flows slowly through a deep fissure, some hundred feet in depth and twenty in breadth. I am particular about the latter, as Darwin related to us an anecdote of one Member of Parliament having been here attacked by armed men—"Clearly a gross breach of privilege!" Mr. X—observed—and of his having in desperation cleared the chasm—a feat, which, though I felt no disposition to emulate, did not seem at all incredible. It seemed to me pleasanter to look down quietly on the calm, silent waters below; the ravine reminded me of the Baths of Pfeffers—but far deeper—and the water filtered through the lava intensely clear, green in

colour, and in brilliancy of that colour rivalling the Grotta Azurra of Capri's purple hue.

Darwin was here in his glory: he knew the spot itself, he knew all the traditions connected with it, he knew the speeches that had been made, the debates, the divisions—he knew everything—and he showed us with complacency the Logberg, *i.e.*, the Hill of Laws, and where the Commons held their booths adjacent.

"Here," said he, "here sate that ancient Iceland Parliament which flourished in full vitality while we in Britain were still in thralldom. Here assembled those mighty Norse chieftains, who, scorning to submit to the yoke of Imperial Charlemagne, fled hither and founded a free Commonwealth. From them it is that we derive our most precious blessing of Self Government; and to think that this goodly fabric has been overthrown, that the very site of their former glory is almost forgotten, that the rude peasant eyes it with indifference, and it is we—we alone—strangers, who approach the hallowed spot with any reverence."

I thought this a favourable opportunity of bringing out one of the few quotations I am up in, so I commenced:

"To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and foolish if it were possible. Far be from me and my friends such frigid philosophy....." but here M'Diarmid, who from the old feud hated Dr. Johnson, gave me a violent nudge, and I held my tongue.

Mr. X—— then inquired whether the Iceland Parliament had any Whips, and receiving no answer from Darwin, except a withering glance of scorn, he shook his head and said it was all very well, (meaning, I suppose, the reverse) but that no Parliament could get on without a Whip, and he was not at all surprised that in such case the Iceland one had turned out a failure.

"And see below," resumed Darwin, "see that

little sandy isle in the river. Did two noble chiefs unhappily quarrel, there they met in duel, while their friends and retainers stood on either bank as spectators. There they decided the quarrel with their good broadswords till one was hailed as conqueror, and the soul of the other flitted to the halls of Odin, happy even in his fall; for him met the Warrior Maids, him they welcomed to Valhalla, for him poured they the sparkling mead—at least such was the ignorant superstition of these poor men,” concluded Darwin, suddenly pulling up, and remembering he was a nineteenth century man.

“And now,” said he, “let us descend the hill and go to the Pool of the Wicked Women;” which we did, and very fair is the pool to look at; the river dashing joyously into the deep circle, and re-issuing through a portal of huge rock, through which the distant country, and the snowy shield of Skjald Breid, (the broad shield) were visible, as it were, framed like the drop-scene at a theatre. A fair and joyous spot, not fit for the murder of women! sentenced for witchcraft forsooth! It was melancholy to think many a poor creature, condemned on false accusation, had here met her doom, and taken the last look of the sapphire sky, spread like a curtain over our heads. We asked Darwin if there was a pool for wicked men, but he was not aware of any such, and when we inquired if this was fair play for the other sex, and how he reconciled such one-handed justice with the boasted chivalry of the Norse race, he could only reply that women were sometimes very provoking!

We spent another day at Thingvalla, and, ere I quit it, let me say I feel how inadequate is my pen to do justice to the theme. The caverned tracts of lava, clothed with moss and lichen—a garment many generations old—the rock-bound valley, the toppling crags, the falling river, the shadowy ravines, where the gaudy splendour of the summer day is mellowed into dim twilight, the pools of pellucid water, the



emerald meadow, the wide expanse of lake beyond, with volcanic isle, the distant mountains mantled in eternal snow—when I look back to them all, they seem rather the fantastic image of a dream than a reminiscence of my actual life.

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### CHAPTER III.

THIS is the mysterious Tintron, the puzzle of geologists, the Lava Spout, the only one known to exist in the world, like unto the blackened stump of a tree, ten feet or so in height, through which the fluid flame is supposed to have once soared in air, as water from the hose of a fire engine. We have left Thingvalla, we have ascended the second Gia, and for leagues around all is lava. Above rise red mountains of calcined earth, and the snows of Skjaldbreid behind. Now we come to grassy plains, and gallop at the top of our speed, leaving sulphur springs to the right, and in view of distant Hecla. Half way we mount our reserve horses, and again proceed through steep ruts, where it requires care to preserve the legs from being twisted off the body, a painful dismemberment, and now we halt at the brink of a blue river. One by one the sure-footed ponies proceed to ford the stream, in whose centre gapes a huge crack in its lava bed, and adown this the water rushes in bright cascade. Over this rent planks have been fixed, and on this bridge, which is not across but in the river, our cavalcade safely treads. We gain an open plain, and are told that behind the hills opposite the Geysers wait us; one more gallop, one more river to ford, and we arrive.

The Geysers is, I believe, the generic name applied to all the hot springs in this district, but we used the word Geyser for the great fount exclusively, the basin of which, encased in a deposit of its own silica,

extrudes like a large boil from the plain; the silica, at first white like stalactite, but soon turning to a dirty gray, assumes divers patterns of quaint design, not unlike frost work.

Two hundred yards back is the Strokr, always in a state of violent excitement and indignation, seething, hissing, sputtering. Spitfire would be a decided misnomer; but the creature is never an instant quiet. Higher up is the kitchen, so called by us because we boiled our meat therein, and all around are innumerable little hot springs bubbling from the clay, some so small, an inch in height, no more, like tiny models of the great Geyser—toys made to amuse a Liliputian monarch.

The first thing we did was to pitch our tent close to the great Geyser, that we might have a full uninterrupted view of the Waterworks, whenever they might play; but a long-headed member of the party observing that, in case of a shift of wind, we should infallibly be scalded to death, a change of position was immediately made, and then we proceeded to bully the Strokr by collecting and throwing in a quantity of turf, with the view of making his dyspeptic stomach disgorge the same.

No one has ventured to take this liberty with the majestic Geyser. Independent of the considerable quantity it would take, such an experiment could only be made after its eruption, when the basin becomes empty and the water sinks low in the funnel. The Strokr has no basin, and can at all times be insulted—haply not with impunity, for after we had pitched in the turf and were lounging carelessly about the brink, suddenly the spiteful little fellow jumped high in air—some thirty feet, I should say—horribly dirty from his dose of turf, a russet brown, in shape and colour like a frost-scorched cypress—up jumped, I say, the Strokr eager to take revenge. We turned and fled; a drop or two of scalding water caught M'Diarmid in his flight. Thrice did the little Strokr lift himself up to

avenge the insult offered him, but he found no other victim.

It is midnight; before seeking my pillow—that is to say my saddle—I look out from the tent: it is brilliant moonlight. I rub my eyes with astonishment to assure myself that I am not dreaming. What strange form is yon—dancing, capering, performing grotesque gambols in the rays of the pale planet? Is it a Troll? a gnome? or goblin? or is it one of that hidden antique race, who, the Icelanders maintain, exist, adorned with tails, in the desert interior of the country, and who sally forth as outlaws and rob all the sheep that cannot otherwise be accounted for? No, no, it is none of these, it is the Lord of the Swiss Valley, the master of Bella Tola. Hail, oh companion of our voyage! though Nature has bereft thee of speech and hearing, has she not bestowed on thee a quick intelligence which education has sedulously improved? Shalt thou not be ever welcomed to our tent and humble meal? Very grateful were you for our small attentions. Not Mr. Micawber himself ever rushed into more copious correspondence.

And at night we occasionally heard thump, thump, and the ground shook beneath us as an earthquake, and we would rush out expecting to see the Geyser play, and he would not. And all next day we waited, and occasionally the same signals were repeated, and slowly would his waters upheave, like an infant sea, and again subside.

And again next night would we hear thump, thump, and feel the earth shake beneath us, and we would rush out from the tent to return miserably cold and disappointed. At last Darwin profanely called the Geyser an old brute!

Whether it was that the noble Geyser was susceptible of this insult, and determined to show himself off to advantage, I know not; but certain it was that between nine and ten next morning, after one of his incipient eruptions, instead of subsiding as before

the solid column of water rose in majesty, while a cloud of steam, like an enormous white banner, floated to leeward. Thrice did the silver pillar fall, and again arise glorious, leaving an impression never to be effaced from our minds. The last time he sunk as though utterly exhausted, and we could enter the basin and peep down the half-empty funnel, while the hot water discharged was coursing down in a hundred little rivulets to the cold river below.

The time which the eruption took could not exceed ten minutes; what was its height, we made various conjectures, but did not accurately ascertain. As the column rose and fell the verses of Schiller recurred to me. I think it smacks of pedantry to quote them, and therefore I quote them:

“Im Hexameter steigt des Springquell's flussige Saule  
Im Pentameter drauf fällt sie melodisch herab.”

Here are statistics:—

Breadth of the lip of the Geyser funnel, 20 feet diameter; there is a slight slope inward from the lip for a little way, so that the diameter of the actual funnel is under 20 feet; the circumference of the fountain of water at the stem of the column would be close on 60 feet; of course it expands as it rises.

The depth of the Geyser funnel 75 feet.

Heat of water at the bottom (1st experiment) 249 degrees.

Heat of water at 37 feet  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 253 degrees.

Heat of water at the bottom (2nd experiment) 270 degrees.

The diameter of the basin 57 feet in its broadest part; it is nearly, but not quite, a complete circle; to walk round it took exactly 60 paces.

Diameter of the Strokr, 8 feet.

Depth of Strokr funnel, 36 feet.

The day was so intensely hot that we were compelled to put up plaids and blankets as awnings. In the afternoon the wind changed, and a cold current of air set in. At night ice lay on the ground. These sudden changes of temperature are trying to some people.

In the afternoon, I am sorry to say, we again bullied the poor Strokr.

Mr. X——, who turned out to be an old traveller, said it was always better to carry clean linen than dirty, and that the Geyser being now our temporary home he did not think he should be contravening the French proverb by making it his wash-tub; so he set to work, and having washed all his things and hung them out to dry, retired into the tent, where Darwin sought him out with a carefully bound volume in his hand which he had extracted from the bottom of his box.

"My dear X——," said Darwin, "you shall read my translation of the Saga. In it you will find for the first time adequately rendered into English, the song of the Valkyries, that is the Corse-choosers, or as some term them, the Fatal Sisters. Ah! as Sir Philip Sidney said of the Ballad of Chevy Chase, it moves the heart like the sound of a trumpet!" And Darwin, with great animation, declaimed several verses, in a to me unknown tongue.

"Vindum, vindum,  
Vef Darraudur,"  
&c., &c., &c.

"Gray, indeed, has attempted to translate it. I am a stranger to vanity, but this I will say, that my version is as superior to that of Gray as.....as.....as....."

"As you are to the Editor of the 'Morning Herald,'" said I, prompted by a reminiscence out of Sir Jonah Barrington.

"Exactly—that is just it! Thank you, Umbra! Let us go for a stroll."

We climbed up the burnt red hill to the left of the Geyser, over ash and crumbling scoria, McDiarmid and Digwell collecting round stones, which they called volcanic bombs, the theory being that they are sent up during an eruption and explode like shells in the air; they are about the size and weight

of grape-shot. At the top of the hill was a fine panorama. Southward, Hecla and the sea, to which more than one river runs, through grassy plains on whose green surface the spot just below our feet, round the Geysers, seemed what it really is, a hot burn—or rather a scald or blister—on the face of Nature. To the North extended countless mountains, the cold brilliancy of whose glaciers glistened in the pale glare of the evening sky.

As we returned, Darwin observed, "I really envy X——! It is a rare privilege for any man to see the Geysers play, and to read for the first time the Njal Saga, on one and the same day." Approaching the tent, we halloed to Mr. X——, but no answer came. "He is too deep in it to attend to us," said Darwin; but when we got close up we found him fast sound asleep, with the book open before him.

"The brute! the insensate brute!" cried the enraged author. "He has fallen asleep over the most interesting chapter in the whole Saga! Perhaps he is dreaming now that he is back in his stupid House. To think that a fellow like that should legislate for me and mine! He should die for this—for a less offence Ella shut up Regner in a dungeon with snakes—he should die. But no," continued he smiting his forehead, "I cannot slay him asleep—for what says the Volsung tale? Guttorm slew Sigurd sleeping, and confusion came of it! evil bred evil! crime engendered crime!—I cannot do it!"

In the meanwhile, Mr. X——, unconscious of the terrible danger he was in, slept calmly, peacefully. At the end of another hour he woke, and quietly returned Darwin his book, thanking him and saying he had been much interested. Darwin, who had now regained his composure, made no reply, but I thought I heard him hiss through his clenched teeth the word "Traitor!" and though not sure, I am willing to suppose he had only been grimly jesting when he talked of killing the somnolent offender.

Meanwhile, our friend Bella Tola was resolved to

make a return of hospitality, and he wrote us formal invitations to come to tea. The whole of the day he spent in cutting white paper into elaborate patterns, destined, he said, to represent Sèvres china. At the appointed hour we went to his tent, and found all his store set forth in splendour. "Le jambon qu'une bonne dame avait glissé dans ma main en partant;" the bottle of cogniac presented to him by another lady; the smoked salmon by a third; the confectionary by a fourth;—in fact the whole female population of Reykjavik seemed to have adopted the adventurous Knight Errant! He could not speak to them—but then he wrote billets-doux.

We did justice to his fare with the exception of the cogniac, which we bade him keep in case of illness. Indeed we were tea-totalers throughout our journey, not from virtue, but from difficulty of transport.

It was the 2nd day of August, 1842—our dear Regner's birthday. When this transpired we all drank his health, not in wine, but in tea made from the Geyser's boiling spring. I am bound to say the speeches were uncommon flat and insipid—in consequence perhaps.

"Oh, thou that wearest hairy garments!" said Darwin, "may'st thou prove worthy of thy great ancestor! May it be a happy omen that the Geyser leapt in air to celebrate your natal day! May you never neglect favourable opportunities of cultivating your talents like some!" continued Darwin, darting a fierce look at the unconscious X——, who had slumbered over the Saga. "But my feelings overcome me. Lodbrog, your health."

"Ceade millia fealth,"—or something like it—said M'Diarmid in Gaelic.

"Macte nova virtute—confound it!—how does it go on? Regner, your good health," said Mr. X——.

Lord Lodbrog returned thanks suitably, and when our entertainer was made aware what was going on he was much excited, and dashed into a series of

letters, inviting us all to come and see him at Bella Tola.

Next morning we parted, going in different directions. Our friend had a wonderfully smart album, to which he made us all contribute. M'Diarmid and Lord Lodbrog painted for him two spirited sketches of the place and of the phenomenon which we had together witnessed. Mr. Darwin wrote such an affecting homily, that it brought tears to the eyes of the sensitive Swiss. Mr. X——, after smoking many pipes, and severe cudgelling of his brains, produced some Latin Sapphics, of which he afterwards gave me a copy. I don't know much about these things myself, but I strongly suspect there is more than one false quantity:

*“Liquit antiquam patriam, domumque  
Alpium celsis nivibus propinquam,  
Vallis Autumni radiis refulget  
Purpurea uvis.*

*“Pervagatur nunc scopulos rigentes  
Ultimæ Thules, cineres, arenam—  
Arbor inclementi hiemum sub aurâ  
Nulla virescit.*

*“Montium hic circum lacerabat olim  
Viscera, erumpens subito tonitru,  
Flammeus torrens; superabat astra  
Arduus Ignis!*

*“Scilicet magnam cumulans ruinam!  
Illius passus ubicunque cernis,  
Fontium crebrè calidi vapores  
Æthera mulcent.*

*“Tutus invisus redeat periculis  
In suas ædes Griolet viator,  
Rideant illi redeunti amonè,  
Sponsa Laresque.”*

Thus translated by Digwell, who did it, so to say, in the smacking of a whip:



"He left his native land afar to roam,  
The ancient country crown'd with Alpine snows,  
Low in the shelter'd valley lies his home,  
Where rich the Autumn's purple vintage glows.

"Now Iceland's barren regions he explores,  
'Mid rocks, and lava, ash, and desert sand,  
So keen the wintry tempest sweeps the shores,  
No tree its leafy honours may expand.

"And all beside him mountains drear ascend,  
Their flanks e'en yet beseam'd with crimson scars,  
Whose womb of yore th' imprison'd fire did rend,  
When the smoke column did obscure the stars.

"Wide ruin spread the element around,  
His havoc leagues on leagues may you descry,  
And still the smould'ring flame lurks underground,  
And tosses boiling fountains to the sky.

"May here our Griolet no danger meet,  
And when he shall recross the foaming main,  
May him his wife and children fondly greet,  
And welcome home the traveller again."

When it came to my turn I knew not what to write. At last, prompted by the recollection of the evening banquet, I scribbled some doggerel lines, of which I only remember the following:

"Comme Bayard, heros sans peur et sans reproche  
Il parcourût l'Islande, un jambon dans sa poche,  
Il voyageait tout seul, et sans autre appui—  
Les femmes l'adoraient—les hommes étaient jaloux de lui."

When these met the eye of our friend he was in some doubt how to take them. They hardly came up to that standard of respect which he assumed as due to himself. I am not sure that he did not meditate for a while my destruction by duello. At last he wrote me word that he forgave me—"Mais," he added, "je suis trop indulgent—beaucoup trop indulgent!"

What the gifted Digwell wrote I know not; alas, how precious would it now be!

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## CHAPTER IV.

WE left the Geysers, intending to follow a road marked in the map at the back of Skjaldbreid, but for some reason the guide whom we engaged preferred to take us between Skjaldbreid and another hill—Trolhals, I believe—and though there was no track, and the march was excessively fatiguing, it revealed to us perhaps the most remarkable scene of desolation that the mind of man can conceive. After leaving the Geysers, scrambling over some rough hills, and riding some miles north-west, we came to a black gorge, not unlike a gigantic coal-scuttle—an undignified but strictly true comparison. At the foot of this the clump of ponies is checked; then deploying in single file the cavalcade winds up the steep face of the cliff by frequent zig-zags, a very picturesque sight to those who watched it from below. Some one profanely compared it to horses mounting the platform at Astley's—an ignoble comparison, felt to be so true as to be almost painful. Arrived at the summit, we found ourselves on a table land that extended some leagues between snow-crowned Skjaldbreid on the right and the other mountain on the left. What a fearful valley! Boulders of lava, domes of lava, walls of lava, pinnacles of lava! We crossed the ridges, which ensued in endless succession, like the swell of the mid-Atlantic Ocean, waves of what had once been fluid fire, the long-rolling billows of an infernal surge, of a tempest whose wild commotion had been fixed by cohesion into everlasting shapes of bristling awe. On all sides horror! horror! horror! The thought winged its

way to the time when it was a tossing liquid sea, glaring with baleful light, and exhaling dreadful fumes. Such a vision must have been present to the mind of Milton, when he depicted Satan prostrate after his fall :

“ The dismal situation vast and wild,  
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
As one great furnace flamed—yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible,  
Served only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow.”

No living object was visible during the whole day's journey. The descent from the lofty valley, still over lava, was yet more toilsome, but very picturesque. To the left we saw the distant lake of Thingvalla, and immediately below us lay a plain, or what from that height seemed one plain, studded with volcanic craters and girdled with a range of higher snowy hills. I remember Mr. X—— took his pipe from his mouth, and pointing with his hand, exclaimed the single word “Mexico!” from which ejaculation I discovered that he had travelled in that country, and saw a resemblance in the scene before us to the celebrated valley from which Hernan Cortes took his title. It was not till we had rode 40 miles that we came to any water for the horses, of which they were greatly in need. Later in the evening we came to a small lake or pond, called Brunnar, where we pitched our tent, and dispersed to collect dry roots of the dwarf birch, as fuel to light our fire and cook our meal.

All next day we rode North, and in the afternoon descended into the Reykholsdalr, which was nearly parallel to the adjacent vale of the Hvita. Puffs of white smoke in the distance gave notice of the hot springs of Reykholt, and when we arrived at that place we found the whole population busy in making hay. The hay-field or tunner (I remember the word from its likeness to tunny-fish) has to be prepared

by removing the hummocks or bumps, into which all the soil of Iceland which is not rock or lava seems to have bulged out, and making it flat as a bowling-green. The houses of the farmers and clergymen (there are none other) are all exactly alike. At a little distance they make rather an imposing figure, having many gables, like an Elizabethan country house; but on a nearer approach the greater part is found to consist of appurtenances, such as barn, stables, fish-stock-house, tool-house, &c., &c. In fact, the actual house contains only one sitting-room, which is always secured by four doors, one within the other, to keep out the violent wind that blows in winter. The walls of the house are of stones and peat, and a crop of grass always grows on the roof.

The churches are of wood brought from Norway, and dragged by horses up the country. The Church of Reykjavik is the only exception, being of stone, and is considered a marvel.

Darwin had been particularly anxious to visit Reykholt, in order that he might inspect the bath of Snorro, a distinguished bard and warrior, who had composed many songs, and killed many people in his day.

The bath still exists—a large circular piece of masonry—and inspired me with much respect for the defunct Snorro, who seems to have been “*avant son siècle*” as regarded ablutions. The water from a contiguous hot spring still trickles into the bath, but alas! it was choked up with weeds and dirt, and was of no use to us.

The Clergyman asked us to his house to take coffee, and here it was that the unfortunate Mr. X—— came to dire disgrace. As I have before hinted, he had some knowledge of the classics, and here he rashly attempted to reply to the Clergyman in the Latin tongue. After a few syllables, he stopped, grew very red, then utterly broke down. “*Vox faucibus hæsit*” would have been the most appropriate quotation he could have cited, had he

had the presence of mind. The Clergyman eyed him with undisguised contempt, and I pitied him—from my heart I pitied him.

We sent our baggage horses next day up the valley, while we galloped three miles in a contrary direction, to look at a hot spring that bursts from a rock in the very bed of the river. Having inspected this natural curiosity, we returned, and followed our train through very pretty scenery, by the side of a river that comes tumbling down blue and white, the colour of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, like a particular kind of Derbyshire spar. We then passed some hills to the left, crossed the infant Hvita, and in the evening encamped on a grassy sward at Kalmanstunga, a waterfall close to our tent, and snow and glaciery to our right.

The next day was the most momentous in all our journey. It was put to long debate whether we should attempt the ascent of Eyrik's Jokul, a mountain which had never been ascended by foreigner or Iclander. The reasons assigned in favour of going up were various.

M'Diarmid, being by nature and constitution a sort of Spartan, was in favour of anything that entailed fatigue or endurance. Another said Eyrik's Jokul was the Key of Iceland, and it would redound to our glory. A third remarked that it would be a jolly lark. Mr. X—— was decidedly averse to going up. He observed that in case we met glaciery we had no ropes and no hatchet, and he made some incoherent remarks about a mountain in Mexico. As Umbra, I was ready to go or stay. At last it was resolved by a large majority to make the attempt; but what with bathing and breakfasting and debating and preparing, half the day was consumed, and it was eleven o'clock when we started. We then rode as quickly as we could up the valley, having constantly to ford the river, and in two hours we came in full sight of that monster Eyrik Jokul. His appearance and shape are peculiar: a scarped per-

pendicular jet-black precipice, surmounted by a dome of snow—the latter, seen from below, like the back of a great fish, or the convex surface of a dessert spoon. For another hour we rode over the rough debris of lava, enlivening the way by killing two unfortunate wild swans whose wings had not grown enough to fly, and who foolishly deserted their native waters to run up the rocks, where they fell an easy prey. At one spot it seemed our progress must be stopped, as we came to a torrent that ran through steep rocky banks, and we in vain searched for a place to cross. At last we all dismounted, and our horses one by one were made to leap down a place which would shock the nerves of a goat. To my surprise, they none of them broke their legs, and after witnessing this feat I could believe anything of Iceland ponies. We left our ponies at the foot of the precipice. We had reconnoitred the hill pretty well, and ascertained that this was the only spot where the ascent of the precipice was practicable. At it we went—the heat was now intense—the loose lava crumbled under our feet; but after an hour the cliff was scaled.

There was now before us a level plain, which of course had been invisible from below, of snow and lava mixed, a mile and a half in extent, and above rose the great snowy dome. The level plain we soon walked across, and stopped ten minutes to lunch. And then commenced that dreadful climb, "*il modo ancor m' offende*," the recollection of it is still grievous to me; no glacier, no crevasses, no danger, no excitement, but sheer hard fatigue. The snow, instead of being frozen hard as we anticipated, so soft and crumbling that at every step we were plunged into it up to our knees. On we went, still up, up, up, occasionally changing the leader in front, in order that others might follow in his footprints—still up, up, up; and that horrid dome, the top of which always seemed near, but which after long hours seemed no whit nearer. Still up, up, up, till at last

the resolution of some failed and they announced their resolve to return.

And now it seemed that the ascent of the Key of Iceland was to be abandoned; for M'Diarmid alone, who though just then the most tired of all, yet loving fatigue for fatigue's sake, was still indomitable—M'Diarmid alone seemed averse to giving it up, when Mr. X——, who was considered the most sluggish of the party, and was just then lying exhausted on the snow, got on his legs and made us a speech! First, he premised that he had been strongly against the attempt, but having begun, it was our duty as citizens of the Great British Empire to go on with it. Secondly, he begged to observe that he had stood two contested elections, which was much more trying than the ascent of any mountain. Thirdly, he made reference to a mountain in Mexico with an unpronounceable name; and he concluded by saying that after having been up the latter, before he would give in to this Iceland excrescence (for so he contemptuously termed the magnificent Eyrik's Jokul) he would rather, on an important division, go into the wrong lobby.

At the close of this unexpected oration our party divided; M'Diarmid, Mr. X——, and the poetic Digwell, pursued their upward way, and in the course of another hour succeeded in reaching the top of the dome, which they described as being a large plateau some miles in extent; but I did not make out that they saw much more than ourselves, who commenced the descent which was fatiguing enough. We had, however, the consolation of a splendid view. To the left, and lower than where we stood, were the glaciers of Long Jokul, Blafell Jokul, Gelt Jokul, mountains which from below had seemed as high as Eyrik's Jokul itself. Range on range of distant hills loomed in the far distance, while northwards stretched a plain studded with innumerable lakes, sparkling like cairn-gorms in the orange light of the setting sun, while, still beyond, a broad gleam

of glory revealed to us the vicinity of the Arctic Sea. What illusive enchantment will not light throw on objects most cheerless in themselves! As seen by that gorgeous sunset the region below us seemed like the realm of fairy land, yet when we came to know it better it was nothing but a wilderness, dreary, waste, and barren. I might make comparisons about all this, and say how hope may dress the dullest condition of life in the liveliest colours, how the deceitful hues vanish, and so on. I might do this, but I will not. It is not the speciality of Umbra to moralize, besides, it is the truer philosophy to enjoy what is bright and sunny while it lasts.

One remark I made as we descended. The shadows thrown on the snow were so blue, that in some places it seemed as though indigo had been spilt on the surface. Once or twice I stopped to make sure it was shadow, and not blue rock. I had often observed before the blueness of shadows on snow, but never had before seen it near so marked, which I suppose may be ascribed to the clearness of the atmosphere. The moon had now risen; at the foot of the snow we re-united the divided parties, and all proceeded together till we reached our horses.

We rode home in three hours, as quickly as the nature of the ground would permit, and the moon having disappeared it required some care to pick our way in the dark. I can remember now how picturesque appeared the leading horsemen, splashing through the frequent fords. There was nothing very picturesque in my friends themselves—Englishmen in shooting coats. But by that uncertain light, now lost to view, now emerging from shadow, they seemed worthy of being mounted Brigands painted by Wouvermans. Even so does partial darkness in some cases, as excess of light in others, enhance the effect.

We arrived at our tent at twelve: our expedition



had taken exactly thirteen hours in all. We supped. The Key of Iceland had been scaled. That night we slept well.

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## CHAPTER V.

NEXT day we rode to Surtshellir, a series of lava caves not far from Kalmanstunga, and three of our party explored them with candles. M'Diarmid preferred to remain outside and sketch Eyrik's Jokul, the history of which name I now for the first time learnt. It seems, a celebrated bandit, Eyrik, lived in this very cave, whence he issued and killed divers persons and plundered much cattle—a Northern Cacus in fact. For a long time his place of retreat was undiscovered, but at last he was unearthed and pursued. He tried to run up the great mountain, but not taking our line of country, was stopped by the precipices, ran into and killed to the great joy of the country at large. Having seen the great cave of Adelsberg the preceding autumn, I did not think it necessary to stumble over more than one of three lava grottoes. Mr. X—— also had seen some cave with an unpronounceable name in America, and expressed his contempt for all others. He had relapsed into indolence, but made piteous complaints of the loss of a tortoiseshell eyeglass which he had left on the top of Eyrik's Jokul. The others, however, to whom caves were a novelty, persevered, and returned well pleased with their journey.

"Eyrik," said Darwin, "deserved his fate—he was a low fellow. But now I will narrate to you an anecdote of a robber that will astonish you. It is intimately connected with the fortunes of one of the first settlers in Iceland, namely, Ingimund, who was son of Thorstein, son of Kettil, Baron of Romsdal in Norway. You know that country, M'Diarmid?"

"I know it well: there is a peaked hill—the Romsdal Horn—which has never been ascended except by one person—a lady."

"At the time I speak of, the country between Romsdal and Upland was unsafe by reason of robbers, and great complaint was made that Baron Kettil, the Governor of the district, did not put them down. At last, irritated by the constant requisitions made to him, he sent for his son Thorstein and gave him a severe jobation. He said, 'Times are very much changed from what they were when I was a young man. The present age is degenerating and getting worse day by day. In my youth men strove hard to obtain wealth and honour; but now, young men think of nothing but taking their ease, eating good dinners, and drinking too much wine.'"

"I tell you what, Darwin, you need not go to Romsdal to hear an oration of that kind. I remember very nearly the same advice conveyed to a friend of mine at the University in a letter from his father."

"Well, Baron Kettil does seem to have been somewhat a '*laudator temporis acti*,' I must confess. However, he concludes his speech by telling his son that there is now a capital opportunity of his redeeming his past conduct by going and exterminating the band of robbers. He then politely showed him the door.

"The unhappy Thorstein pursued his way till he came to a thick wood, reputed to be the headquarters of the robbers, and following a path presently came to a house; fastening his horse to a tree, he entered the house which he found empty, but in it an immense bed, and a table prepared for supper. Not knowing with whom he might have to deal, Thorstein concealed himself, and resolved to watch a favourable opportunity of attacking the suspected robber; for, says the Chronicle, in excuse for such conduct, he thought all stratagems fair against a disturber of the public peace. After some time, the master of the

house appears, the tallest and strongest man whom Thorstein had ever seen in his life."

"I saw a strong man once," interrupted Mr. X——, "who told me he had killed twelve bears with his penknife. He was a liar!"

"Very likely. The new comer looks carefully round, and the appearance of the fire excites his suspicions; but after making a strict search, and failing to find Thorstein, who had crouched between the bed and the wall, he sits down and makes a hearty supper; he then retires to bed and falls asleep. Twice did Thorstein move, and each time his neighbour started up, but seeing nothing fell back and slept again. The third time Thorstein seizes his sword and runs it through the sleeper's breast."

"Then I say he was a brute," said Digwell. "To kill a man asleep after supper is taking a base and cowardly advantage."

"It seems a cowardly action, I own," resumed Darwin. "I think Baron Kettil was right when he said his son had got enervated by luxury. However, the robber, though mortally wounded, was not dead, and catching Thorstein by the throat, he pinned him against the wall, and had him at his mercy."

"And I hope he squeezed his life out," said Digwell; "serve him right."

"He did not. He was the most extraordinary forgiving and far-seeing robber I ever heard of. He made Thorstein tell him his name and rank, and then observed—'It is all over with me. Know that I am Jokul, the son of Earl Ingimund. I lived too fast in my youth, and to supply my wants I took to the road—this is the end of it. I repent of all the murders and robberies I have committed on innocent travellers. As for you, you would not be a bad match for my sister. Take this ring and tell my parents that it is my last wish that you should marry Thordis, and that they should forego the blood-feud, which, between ourselves, is a foolish prejudice.'"

"You don't mean to say, Darwin, the robber acted and talked as sensibly as all that?"

"I do indeed. Obstupuit Thorsteinus, says the Chroniele, tali magnanimitate; so poor Jokul gave up the ghost. Thorstein went home and informed the Baron Kettill that he had crushed the robbers, doing in one day what the other had only talked of so many years. The Baron seems to have been rather ashamed of his former speech, and praises his son highly; but on hearing the whole story, and learning his son's determination to repair to the court of Earl Ingimund, he does all he can to dissuade him, hinting that his reception will probably be anything but agreeable.

"Thorstein, however, is resolved, and goes to Gautria, the country of Earl Ingimund. He finds, on arriving, that the Earl is out hunting, but the Countess is at home, and to her he tells his whole story. On the return of the Earl, she informs him that she has news to tell him. 'Perhaps the death of my son Jokul,' replies Earl Ingimund. She says yes; and relates to him the strange circumstances of the case. Ingimund appears not to have cared much for the loss of his son, but he was unwilling to forego the blood-feud, as such a course he held to be compromising the dignity of the family. However, after many pros and cons whether Thorstein is to be tortured and killed or accepted as a son-in-law, that take up several pages, the mild, philosophic counsel of the departed Jokul prevailed."

"Perhaps Thordis was like muckle-mouth Meg," said M'Diarmid.

"I can't say. Thorstein married Thordis, amid great rejoicings both in Romsdal and Gautria. For his conduct in putting himself in the power of him whose son he had killed, in accordance with his promise given to that son, he is compared by the historian to Marcus Regulus returning from Rome to Carthage. He is also said to have led a prosperous life, increasing his wealth by piracy in the

summer and by attention to home business in winter—*Rem familiarem piraticâ, honesto id temporis exercitio, per astates, per hiemes vero res domesticas prudenter administrando, auxit—*”

“Pray, Darwin, why was piracy at sea considered honourable, and robbery on land infamous?”

“Public opinion settles that. When Ulysses arrived at Corcyra he was asked if he was a pirate; it was meant rather as a compliment than otherwise. A foot-pad was always reckoned ungentle. Thorstein must have had a good deal of Baron Kettil in him, as I find him afterwards said to be tacitly indignant at the expensive mode of life of his son Ingimund, who stops with him a whole winter with twenty friends, eating him out of house and home. Thordis, however, turns it off by a graceful allusion to the spirit of magnificence which her son had inherited from his father. Ingimund, as I have said, planted a colony in Iceland, and by his father's express desire called one of his sons Jokul, in remembrance of his poor uncle, the Robber of Romsdal.”

This tale of Norway was told us by Darwin outside the lava cave of Surtshellir, in sight of the snowy dome of Eyrik's Jokul.

We started next morning early and left pleasant Kalmanstunga. This was reckoned the most arduous day's march of all, as we had to cross the district called the Wilderness, the same that looked so delightful, seen under the rays of the setting sun from the heights of Eyrik's Jokul. To Mr. X——, who had once been thirty days in the “great and terrible Wilderness,” where the Israelites sojourned forty years (*pace* Colenso), the apprehensions expressed about this tract seemed rather far-fetched; but it must be remembered that in the East camels can journey many days without water or other food than the scanty wild lavender of the desert; while in Iceland it is an absolute necessity to arrive each evening at some spot where grows grass for the

horses. The district before us was for some fifty miles first lava and then treacherous bog. Half way we change our horses. Many and many a lake we passed. Sometimes we came to soft ground and had to retrace our steps, making a considerable detour. Late in the evening, we hit a valley where a rivulet was running towards the sea. Then we knew we were out of the scrape—to say out of the wood in Iceland, where no tree grows, would be a decided blunder. By the side of the stream extended meadows of the softest turf. Dr. Johnson said the greatest pleasure in life was to go fast in a post-chaise; but far more exciting is it after picking your way all day through rough lava and a boggy Syrtis, to gallop over green fields. The horses seemed to partake of the delight. For eight miles we raced without stop, and then pulled up before a church rejoicing in the hard name of Efrinupfr.

Next day we crossed over a ridge of hills and came down on an arm of the sea, the Hrutfjodr, and slept at Melar. I remember nothing particular about the journey, except we in vain attempted to get in shot of some Northern Divers on a lake, the mention of which suggests to me that this Diary may be getting slightly dull, like that of the soi-disant African traveller, over which poor Gilbert Gurney fell asleep when he came to the passage "saw some goats to the left." I shall therefore enrich it by the insertion of one of the most splendid specimens of poetry which I know in any language, written by my friend Mr. Digwell; and though loth to bring a charge of plagiarism against an author so distinguished as Mr. Alfred Tennyson, I would ask any person to candidly examine the text, and say whether the germ of one of Mr. Tennyson's most admired poems may not be traced in this effusion of my gifted friend. Mr. Tennyson is now Poet Laureate, and poor Digwell sleeps at Mossfell—but no matter.

## DIGWELL'S LAMENT.

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn,  
 Leave me here, and when you want me, let Regner sound his  
 bugle horn.

I go, I say, to see a lake, but in truth to meditate  
 By myself in sad communion, on my wretched, wretched state.

When my uncle George did ask me to come to Iceland for a  
 treat,

Little, little did I reckon I should nothing get to eat.

What avails it that the Geysers spout their steaming columns  
 high?

Can a fountain of hot water hungry longings satisfy?

Skir for breakfast, soup for dinner, and between my teeth I  
 crunch

A biscuit, or a piece of carka, hard as granite, for my lunch.

My curse upon the grainless isle! this vast and desert solitude!  
 Oh! the dreary, dreary moorland, barren, barren of all food!

When at night within the tent I lay me down and capture  
 sleep,

Dreams of pleasure, dreams enchanting, on my wearied senses  
 creep.

Joints of six-year mutton woo me, mighty sirloins smoking hot,  
 Beefsteaks, kidneys, roast potatoes, and of sausages a lot.

Visionary pots of porter before my close-seal'd eyelid foam,  
 And again I taste the comforts which I used to prize at home.

Fool! again the dream! the fancy! I wake upon my grassy  
 bed,

Cold and hungry stare about me—all the lovely vision fled.

Still I feel the wild pulsation which in early youth I knew,  
 When I first did go to Cambridge, and my College debts were  
 few,

Yearning with the large excitement undergraduate freshmen  
 feel,

Eager-hearted, after chapel, flocking to their morning meal.

Hark! my careless comrades call me—Regner sounds his  
 bugle horn—

They to whom my appetite is but a target for their scorn;

They, the callous, if not cruel, at my direst sufferings laugh—  
They no crumbs of comfort give me, but a quantity of chaff.

Damn the Geysers, damn the lava, lakes, bogs, fiordhs, doubly  
damn

The skeir, although I rather like it when 'tis mixed with  
strawberry jam,

For the skeir does run quite through me, just as if I were a  
sieve,

And my much-perplex'd interior emptier than before doth  
leave.

But the ponies now are saddled and I must my own bestride—  
Oh! my craving, craving hunger, when will it be satisfied?

The skeir, concerning which Mr. Digwell makes feeling complaint, consist of whipped cream with a sour taste like curds, but was rather palatable when mixed with a pot of jam which some Sybarite among us had brought from the stores of Fortnum and Mason. Although I cannot go so far as Mr. Digwell in his complaints about our fare, still I own we were occasionally on short commons. However, at Melar we stayed the Sunday, bathed, washed our linen, and M'Diarmid, the skilful fisherman, caught two salmon, which, cooked quite fresh, would have afforded ecstatic delight to the most scientific epicure.

Darwin and I took a stroll to see some famous battlefield where some one had killed somebody, but I forget the names. We left Lodbrog painting and Mr. X—— reading a pocket Lucretius. Darwin had taken these two in the morning much against their will to pay a visit to the Frankman or Farmer of the place from whom he thought it probable he might obtain some information. I must observe that throughout our tour we always experienced the greatest courtesy and hospitality from the clergy and the yeomen. With the former, Darwin's name was a passport, for they were all acquainted with his great work on Scandinavian antiquities, and invited us to come and partake of coffee; and the unlettered farmers, who were not so erudite, would from pure



goodwill to the traveller proffer us a bowl of milk—but he at Melar had proved an exception. They had found him closeted with a drunken priest; both had seemed to consider the room of their visitors preferable to their company, and Darwin was much annoyed at the reception.

“The boor!” said he; “the foolish, idiotic boor! he seemed to wish to get rid of us.”

“Well, you know the proverb,” said I—“*Charbonnier est maître chez lui.*”

“Maître,” replied Darwin; “yes, but he ought to have been proud to see us. Why, just consider who were his visitors: a Knight of the Walrus—a man whom, I may say without false pride, Kings and Universities delight to honour. Regner, an Irish Peer, descendant of the famous Lodbrog; and Mr. X——, he is a stupid fellow certainly, and went asleep over the Saga, but the man could not have known that, and there is no reason he should treat him with incivility.”

“Was Mr. X—— put out?” I asked.

“That fellow has much too good an opinion of himself ever to be put out; but when I was telling the lout of some most striking events that had occurred on his own land, he gave a great yawn, and X—— said to me in Latin, ‘*Darwin, mi fili, ne jacias margaritas tuas ante porcos!*’—that was really well said of X——, I have some hopes of him still.”

“I wish you would tell me, Darwin—is Regner obliged to wear those hairy garments?”

“Not obliged, you simple Umbra, but it is his privilege to wear them—*hirsuta braccia* Olaus Wormius terms them in his book *De Literatura Runica*, as it is the privilege of the Knight of Kerry to wear his hat before the Sovereign.”

“Can you inform me of Olaus Wormius?”

“Certainly—I am always delighted to satisfy reasonable curiosity. He was a Danish author who, besides the book I mentioned, wrote a curious treatise concerning heathen monuments. To him Johannes

Mejerus addressed a complimentary set of verses, a vile parody of Horace's Ode to Fons Bandusiæ: *Te flagrantis atrox hora caniculæ* he changes to *Te liventis atrox scanna calumniæ, nescit tangere*. Can you conceive any more detestable?"

"Odious! It would shock X——."

"However, this is a digression. Olaus Wormius gives the dying chant of Regner when shut up in prison with vipers; it is in twenty-nine stanzas, and each stanza begins with '*Pugnativimus ensibus*.' It is translated by him from the Norse into Latin; but as I fancy you are not over strong in Latin, Umbra, I will render it into English for you—roughly but pretty accurately.

"We fought with swords!—My banner flew  
In Gothland's gales, where young I slew  
The dragon that laid waste the land,  
The prize to me was Thora's hand—  
My hairy breeches I did wear,  
The skin of the Norwegian bear.  
Vain was the monster's venom'd spite,  
Those hairy breeks he could not bite;  
My followers hence, with loud acclaim,  
Regner Lodbrog me did name.

"We fought with swords!—I sought the East,  
And there I gave a noble feast  
Unto the prowling forest beast  
And to the yellow-footed kite,  
So deep my trusty sword did bite.  
My galley sail'd to Oreon's bay,  
Where we did strive the livelong day,  
One sanguined wound was Ocean's flood,  
And the crow did swim in blood!"

"That is rather an exaggerated expression, is it not?"

"It is correct.

"*Omnis erat Oceanus vulnus  
Vadavit corvus in sanguine cæsorum.*"

"It seems all about killing," said I.

"To be sure it is. You would not have a Norse Champion sit on his stool like a Master in Chancery, would you? No, sir, those were stirring times. Up and be doing was their motto. To proceed:

"We fought with swords!—Hibernia's shore  
 Long time my visit did deplore:  
 Beneath my spear's resistless thrust  
 Eight of her Barons bit the dust—  
 The orphan'd maiden then did tear  
 The tresses of her yellow hair.  
 When the dubious battle reels,  
 Not rapture more the bridegroom feels  
 When first in his enamour'd arms  
 He clasps a blooming virgin's charms.

"We fought with swords!—O well-fought field!  
 I raised on high my magic shield!  
 Submissive to my conq'ring sword,  
 Northumbria now must own me Lord.  
 Now in air the javelin sings,  
 Now the pike 'gainst buckler rings—  
 Corse is piled on bloody corse,  
 Man on man, and horse on horse!  
 Oh, the joy, the burning joy,  
 When my foemen I destroy!  
 I ween he knows no greater bliss  
 Who does a youthful widow kiss!"

"Lodbrog seems to have had free ideas about beauty and booty, Mr. Darwin."

"To be sure!" answered Darwin, much excited, flourishing his horsewhip like a scimitar over his head, and bounding from one bump of peat to another. "Forwards!—charge!—unfurl the Raven banner!—væ victis—spare neither age nor sex!—I cannot remember all the twenty-nine stanzas, but the unconquered Regner was trepanned by Ella, King of Northumberland, to visit him, and thrown into a dungeon with snakes."

"So died Roderick, King of the Goths," said I.

"Ay, but that was penance. Regner had no idea of penance—he died game. Hear the last stanza:

“ We fought with swords!—Now comes my end—  
The serpents bite, my flesh they rend.  
Ella I curse with dying breath—  
My sons, avenge your father’s death ;  
This will ye do, for ye are brave,  
No faithless race Aslauga gave.  
But me the Warrior Sisters call,  
Me they invite to Odin’s Hall,  
Me at the entrance will they meet,  
And lead me to the highest seat.  
From foemens’ skulls the mead I’ll quaff—  
Ha! ha! I die—and dying laugh!

“ Ah, he was a glorious fellow! You will be happy to hear that his sons did avenge his death. They sailed over to Northumberland and made Ella a spread eagle. Let us hope that our Regner will tread in the steps of his heroic ancestor.”

“ God forbid, Mr. Darwin,” said I. “ Lodbrog, though I doubt not as brave as his namesake, is a most gentle youth. Surely you do not wish him to kill eight Irish Barons, and kiss their widows, in one day?”

Darwin cleared his eyes like one awaking from a dream. At last he said, “ What a matter-of-fact fellow you are, Umbra! What I meant to express was a hope that Lodbrog would prove a shining as well as an useful ornament to society.”

“ With all my heart,” said I.

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## CHAPTER VI.

ON Monday we left Melar, crossed the hills to the west, struck the Laxardalr, and at evening halted at Hjardovholt in sight of the Hvam Fiordh.

It was here, during the time that elapsed between our arrival and our meal, that this conversation occurred between Mr. Darwin and myself, as we lay lazily stretched on the newshorn grass:

*Darwin.* You are, now, Umbra, at perhaps the most remarkable historic spot in all Iceland; it was here that Kjartan dwelt—even here!

*Umbra.* You don't say so! Who was he?

*Darwin.* Kjartan was the bravest man in all Iceland, and he loved Gerdrun, the fairest and proudest woman, the daughter of Osvif; he was engaged to her—you hear me?

*Umbra.* Ay, and mark thee. I say, Darwin, do you think dinner is ready?

*Darwin.* Dinner! pshaw! I am telling you the most eventful chapter in the Saga. Kjartan went to Norway, whether on a peaceful or warlike errand I know not, but while he tarried there.....Halloo, Umbra! you are not asleep?

*Umbra.* Not at all; I am all attention. I only closed my eyes to listen better.

*Darwin.* Well, while Kjartan was in Norway, his bosom friend, Bolli, the son of Tkorlak, persuaded Gerdrun of Kjartan's infidelity and married her himself.

*Umbra.* Save me from my friends!

*Darwin.* When Kjartan returned from Norway and found his betrothed married, he took another woman to wife. Then Gerdrun conceived bitter hatred for her former lover, and she instigated her husband, Bolli, to lay an ambush for Kjartan's life. Bolli reluctantly consented, and slew his too-confiding friend. On his return from the place of murder, Gerdrun met him and learned the success of her treacherous scheme. "It is now three o'clock," said she to her husband, "we both have done a good morning's work: you have slain Kjartan, and I have spun twelve ells of yarn."

*Umbra.* She was a deuced strong-minded woman, that Gerdrun. When did she live?

*Darwin.* About the year 1000. But listen; the strangest part of the story is to come. Gerdrun married three husbands, and on her death-bed confessed to her son that the only person she really

loved was Kjartan, whom she caused to be murdered. I was worst, said she, to him whom I loved most.

*Umbra.* Now that is a very interesting story of yours, Darwin, and what is more, I believe it. I can fancy the jealous Gerdrun never giving her husband a moment's peace till he went and killed the only man she cared for, because he had got married to another; that was a true woman! Queer creatures, women, Darwin, eh? they can't keep quiet, can they?

Mr. Darwin looked to the north, to the south, to the east, and the west, and saw no one. He then looked up and watched a red-beaked puffin flying towards the Hvam Fiordh—it was soon some miles away. Satisfied that this bird of the air could not repeat his words, he squeezed me by the hand and said.....

\* \* \* \* \*

They were busy hay-making here, as elsewhere. The Clergyman asked us into his house to take coffee. He had a large family, and M'Diarmid good-naturedly took a blooming little maiden of six or seven years a ride on his pony; while Lord Lodbrog drew a very accurate sketch of his house and church. It was really very nicely done, and when pinned up against the wall of the sitting-room had a smart appearance. I doubt not that to this day, it is regarded as a *chef d'œuvre* in the country around, equal to a Salvator Rosa. Mr. X—— meanwhile, had been looking over the books, and found they were all in Icelandic, of which he knew nothing, except one in Latin, in which he was speedily engrossed.

We took leave of the amiable clergyman at Hjardovholt, and marched westward ho.

"Pray, Darwin," said Mr. X——, "we are still in the Laxardalr are we not?"

"To be sure we are. You must know that; you were poring over the map for a whole hour last night."

"The Laxardalr is rather a celebrated valley, is it not? I know its name means the Vale of the Salmon—but in other respects?"

"It is indeed, X——. There is not a valley more frequently mentioned in the Sagas."

"Whereabouts do you suppose Gris and his wife Kolfinna lived?"

Darwin reeled in his saddle as though a rifle-ball had struck him. "How, in the fiend's name," said he, "are you acquainted with that story? I had intended to keep it a careful secret, for I feared it was calculated to promote levity."

Mr. X—— laughed provokingly.

"Well, it is very odd, X——, that you, who would not read what I gave you to read, must go and rake out from a book in a clergyman's house such a piece of scandal—for I cannot deny that it somewhat reflects on the pure morality of the ancient Icelanders."

"Tell us, by all means!" we all shouted.

"To do that I must narrate to you the whole history of Halfroedus—Vandroedi Skald—Halfred, the Dangerous Bard."

"We have the whole day before us—narrate!" And Mr. Darwin commenced:—

"Halfred, the Skald, or Bard, was born not far from here; the son of Ottar. From his earliest years he was addicted to satirical poetry. He was a comical fellow certainly, and his poetry often got him into trouble; however, it twice saved his life. Of his personal appearance I only find it recorded that he had an ignoble nose, which I presume means a turn-up, or supercilious nose, befitting a satirist. In his youth he was in love with Kolfinna, the daughter of Avaldius. Her father, finding that he could make no proper settlements, arranged another marriage for her with Gris (which means boar, or hog), an old soldier, who had returned from Constantinople, where he had acquired wealth. On the bridegroom elect coming to pay his court, he was much disgusted at finding Halfred engaged in kissing

his betrothed, and also shouting out satirical verses to the disparagement of him—Gris. I fear the vice of punning was here brought into play. However, after much quarrelling, Ottar forced his son to leave the country, while Gris stayed, and married Kolfinna.

“Halfred repaired to the Court of Olaf Trygvesson, who was busy at that time in converting the heathen, and he consented to be baptised if the King would stand his godfather; to which Olaf agreed, and presented him with a sword without a scabbard, ‘For,’ said his Majesty ‘*Periculosus ensis convenit periculoso poetæ.*’

“He soon stood in need of his godfather’s protection, for, having slain a man in a brawl, he was about to be executed, when he demanded the King’s protection. Olaf promised to save him if he would make eight impromptu verses, bringing the word sword in each. This he does in so brilliant a manner that the King not only gives him his life, but adds a splendid scabbard to his former gift of a sword.

“He now remained the boon friend of the King, till one Kalfus laid a complaint against him that he was not a true Christian, but secretly cherished an image of Thor made out of whale ivory. Halfred denied this as a calumny, but as proof of orthodoxy was commanded to seek out one Thorstein, a refractory Pagan, and bring back his head or his two eyes. In order to effect this, Halfred disguises himself as an old beggar, in the last stage of decrepitude, and, meeting Thorstein, contrives to turn the conversation to wrestling, and it ends by their having a trial of strength. Halfred gets down his antagonist, and speedily gouges out one eye.”

“Why, I thought that was an American practice, exclusively,” said Digwell.

“There is nothing new under the sun, nephew. Thorstein now found out who was his opponent, and guessing the state of the case implored him to spare his other eye, saying he might live to do him a good turn.



"Halfred relented, and on his way home was reproached by his attendants, who asked him how he would face the King; on which Halfred turned out of his way, sought his calumniator Kalfus, and gouged out one of his eyes. He then produced the two eyes to Olaf as those of the blinded Thorstein; but royalty was not deceived, for turning sternly to Halfred, Olaf exclaimed, 'Sir, these eyes are not pairs!'

"Having fallen somewhat in disgrace by this adventure, Halfred travelled to Sweden. He is there invited home by a very strong man and his wife, who attempt to murder him in the night. He, however, kills his treacherous host, but is apprehended by the neighbours, tried for murder, and led to execution. At the critical moment, however, a lady of the name of Ingibergis, inquires whether he is not Halfred Vandroedi Skald. Of this he gives proof, and so great was the fame of his compositions that the people immediately decreed his release."

"Ah!" sighed Digwell, "it was something to be a poet in those days. Poetry is a drug in the market now."

"Halfred, out of gratitude, married Ingibergis, had sons by her, and lived happily."

"Is that all?"

"No; I now approach with reluctance the sequel. His wife died, and Halfred besought Olaf to allow him to return to Iceland, his native land. Olaf reluctantly consented, saying he felt assured he should never see him again. Halfred landed, and with eleven companions, in gay dresses, rode up this very valley Laxardalr, where we now are. He comes to a house, and recognizes his old love Kolfinna. Gris's proper house was in Langdal, a valley rather to the north of this, but he had a villa here, where Kolfinna and her maidens came occasionally in summer. I am sorry to say that Halfred, being invited in with his friends, played the part of the Count Ory, the husband being away.

"Kolfinna always declared that force was used against her; and that Halfred, adding insult to injury, at night recited to her some additional satirical stanzas on Gris, as a supplement to those he had formerly composed.

"Gris came home next day, and being informed by his wife of the violence used against her, and also of the satirical verses, was driven nearly mad by the latter, and summoning his followers pursued Halfred. The latter fled; but in his flight killed Einar, a brother of Gris, and gained his father's land. A meeting subsequently took place to see if the quarrel could be patched up, but during the palaver Brandus, brother-in-law of Gris, killed Galtius, the brother of Halfred. It was then declared that the quarrel could never be satisfactorily settled save by mortal combat between Halfred and Gris, and both day and place were settled.

"At the appointed time Gris appeared ready for the combat, armed with a long sword that had been presented to him by his former master, the Emperor of Constantinople."

"And Halfred?"

"Why, this is the most singular part of all. When he woke that morning, Halfred said he had had a dream, in which King Olaf had appeared to him and besought him not to fight. Just as they were going to engage, some horsemen galloped up, bringing the news from Norway that King Olaf was dead. Then Halfred declared that it was the evident will of Heaven that he should not fight, and he accordingly declined."

"It was a very convenient dream."

"Some of Halfred's companions twitted him in this sense, hinting cowardice on his part; but here his enemy Gris unexpectedly came to the rescue, saying that when *his* master the Emperor of the Greeks had died—the one who gave him the sword—he had been so affected that he could not think of fighting or anything else, and he thought that under

the circumstances Halfred was quite justified in not going on with the duel."

"I tell you what," said Lodbrog, "I believe it was a regular cross, and nothing else."

"Why, Gris's conduct was suspicious, I admit. He said that Einar's death was balanced by that of Galtius; and as for the violation of his wife, and the satirical lines, if Halfred chose to make him a handsome present by way of atonement, and would promise to compose no more verses on him, he would think no more of the matter."

"Quocunque modo rem," interposed Mr. X——.

"So Halfred gave him a gold bracelet which had been presented to him by Earl Sigward, and then set sail for Norway. It is said, however, he could not help having one more fling in verse against Gris, as a parting shot."

"Is that all?"

"Nearly. On his way home he was arrested by Earl Henry, and for the third time was being led to execution, when an old, one-eyed man came and interceded for him; it was his old antagonist Thorstein.

"'Would you save him who put out your eye?' asked Earl Henry.

"'But he spared the other,' said the benign Pagan. So Halfred again got off."

"Poor old Thorstein!" said Digwell, "he was the better Christian of the two."

"Halfred died at Iona. He put in there, being driven south by a storm on his way to Iceland, and was taken ill. His last words, in reply to the doctor about his illness, were couched in two facetious verses. He was buried at Iona. Perhaps his tomb is there now; I will go and look some day."

We soon came to Hvamfiordh, and forded the higher extremity at low water. The scenery was of the grandest description; the sea smooth without a ripple; to the left rose snowy hills in form not unlike the Cuchullins in Skye. A number of wild swans were floating on the bay with their cygnets,

to which last an eagle at a distance seemed to be bestowing marked attention. Other marine birds were disporting themselves, oyster-catchers and sand-pipers, of which last we shot some for the pot.

I never remember a finer day, and the vast expanse of ocean, without a sail or skiff on its bosom, stretching out towards Greenland, and the encompassing mountain solitudes, presented pleasing pictures of repose.

I think the beauty of the weather must have inspired us for we all commenced, each after his own fashion, a grand pæan in praise of the sea, reciting it strophe and antistrophe, as in the Chorus of the Greek Drama.

M'Diarmid lifted up the strain :

"Hail to the Sea! the great Sea on which I paddled when I was a little bairn! that bathed my childhood's happy home—even the misty hills of Morven—where my ancestor, Diarmid, slew the boar; where Fingal chased the deer, and wept over the fate of the huntress of Ardrven, after he had slain Carac'huil the dark-brown chief with the red rolling eye. Oh, Albin, siol nan laoich!"

"Yes," returned Darwin, "hail to the Sea which the sons of Lochlin ploughed in their dragon-barks! which the long serpent skimmed victorious; the Sea which Thor, blinded by the spells of Utgard Loki, tried to lap up from the magic goblet; but the Æsir, though a stalwart drinker, could not drain the 'asbeston poron'—the quenchless stream of Ocean."

"Hail," cried Oxonian Lodbrog, "to Thalassa! which Xenophon's comrades re-saw, and seeing blessed at the close of their unrivalled march. Hail, father Oceanus! thou whose daughters visited to console the fettered Titan! thou whose Tritons blew their conch as I my horn! whose frolic Nereids pursued with many twinkling feet the Athenian galley through the flashing foam!"

"Hail to the Sea!" replied Mr. X——, "that washes many lands; he is my ancient friend. I have

known him long—by Calpe's rock, by Syria's shore. They call him Red where I wandered by him in Arabian deserts, and Black where he strikes against the dark Symplegades. Cold was he in the Bay of St. Lawrence, tepid in the Gulf of Mexico; but he is the one Sea. How quiet is he now! you may pat him on the head like an old bloodhound; but some day he may turn against and rend you."

"Hail to the Sea!" resumed Mr. Digwell, "that rolls over coral reefs, carboniferous strata, buried ichthyosauri, and fossilised crocodiles! that contains in its bed the slow-stored deposit of uncounted æons. How mysterious is the voice in which he whispers to us of these primæval marvels! Oh, would that it were given to me to read the great secret of the Sea!"

"Hail to the Sea!" said I, Umbra, "rather than be on which, poor Panurge envied the lot of them that planted cabbages; happy, and thrice happy, called he these, for they had always one foot on land and the other not far from it. Hail to the nutritious and food-giving Sea! that produces soles, turbot, whittings, mackerel, mullet red and gray, crabs, lobsters, shrimps, prawns, herrings, anchovies, sardines, pilchards, haddocks, flounders, oysters, cod, smelts, brill, skate, salmon, sprats, and John Dory—all that Ellison, when he dined with Elia, reckoned for nothing!"

Grand Chorus—"Hail to the Sea!"

"Good!" said Darwin, who was in immense spirits, and made his horse curvet; "I will sing you a genuine Scandinavian ditty:

"Through sunshine, storm, or drift,  
Still urged by favouring gales,  
As the sea-eagle swift,  
Th' enchanted galley sails.

"Her deck the Æsir tread  
All arm'd with shield and glaive,

With Baldur at their head,  
The beautiful and brave.

"Hide, ye Frost-Giants, hide  
Ye Trolls—seek desert caves!  
To crush your race's pride  
Skithblathnir cleaves the waves!"

"Who, Mr. Darwin?" I asked, "who cleaves?"

"Skithblathnir. Surely you know about Skithblathnir?"

"Not I. Is it man or woman?"

"A ship—the enchanted ship of Freyr. It was so large that it would hold all the Æsir, or it could be made so small that it could go in Odin's waistcoat pocket."

"That certainly was a most convenient transport," said Mr. X—; "if we could have them in our dockyards!"

"And who were the Æsir?"

"The Æsir," replied Darwin, "were the gods. Odin was the Northern Zeus. The Trolls and Frost-Giants answered to the Titans in Greek mythology."

"Mutato nomine fabula narratur," quoth Mr. X—.

"But to think you should not know all this! The amount of ignorance in this world is inconceivable! It is still supposed in Iceland that the Trolls retain exclusive possession of the mountains, and are not to be interfered with. They will not be over-well pleased with you, M'Diarmid, or X—, or my nephew, for getting to the top of Eyrik's Jokul."

"We will stand the feud of all their clan," said M'Diarmid.

"They are awkward customers, I can tell you. In the days of King Olaf of Norway, sixty of his knights set out to combat the Trolls, and came to a dark wood, when out rushed 'tres monstrosæ fœminæ,' one of whom was big as a bear, with coal-black face, 'ursæ instar, cineraceo vultu,' says the Chronicle, and a male giant with two boys. They

killed all the knights except four, who escaped to tell the tale."

"The deuce!"

"The last Troll was seen by King Olaf himself. He was rowing single-handed in a boat, and the King's galley with all its oarsmen could not catch him up. At last the Troll rested on his sculls, grossly insulted King Olaf, and then rowed away and was seen no more."

"And the Frost-Giants, Darwin? You have not told us about the Frost-Giants."

"The poor Frost-Giants were a simple race, and the Æsir improved them off the face of the earth. Thor lost his famous hammer, Mjolnir, and found it was in the possession of the Giant Thrym. Thrym refused to restore it to the owner, unless he obtained the hand of his sister Freya, the eldest daughter of Odin, in marriage. Freya had no idea of making such a mesalliance, so Thor put on her clothes and, accompanied by Loki, went himself as the bride. When he got to Thrym's court he rather astonished the expectant bridegroom by the appetite he displayed at supper, for he ate an ox and six salmon!—that is more than you could manage, nephew."

Mr. Digwell only replied to this unworthy insinuation by a regard of mingled dignity and defiance.

"Thrym remarked on his betrothed's powers of consumption, but the wily Loki responded, 'She has fasted twelve days from love of you.' Thrym then audaciously raised the fair one's veil. 'What burning eyes she has!' said he. 'They beam with love for you,' said Loki. On which the deluded Giant gave the hammer, and Thor cracked his skull with it, as you would crack a walnut!"

We had a very long march, and in consequence of having sent on our train, which we never caught up, were unable to mount our reserve horses. It is the only day I remember when my horse was fairly tired. At last we reached our resting-place, of the terrible name of Breidabolstaor.

Next day Mr. Darwin was much excited, as we stopped near Helgofell, or Thorstein, a hill sacred to the god Thor, where the Icelanders, before the introduction of Christianity, congregated to worship that divinity. Indeed so sacred was it that no one was allowed to lift his eyes and gaze on the holy height without having previously washed all over; a regulation which I much commend, as it entailed cleanliness. The hill itself is curious, as being formed of irregular columnar basalt, and commands a fine panoramic view.

"My friends," cried Darwin, "I congratulate you all! At last—at last we stand on the sacred hill itself, which even the Christians regarded not without awe; for here, say they, after the establishment of their creed the authority of Satan (with whom they confounded Thor) still lingered. And it is told how a shepherd in the employment of Thorstein, Thorskabitus—that is Ictiophagus, which being interpreted is the Fish-eater—when his master was out at sea, was at night tending his flocks, just below us, when he saw the mountain open, and a vast chamber all lighted up with vivid fires was revealed to him; and in it were a numerous crew carousing at table; and at the head sate old Thorolf Mostrobarba, the father of Thorstein, who had long been dead, but whom he had known well; when suddenly all the company stood up, and with loud cheers greeted Thorstein himself, who walked in and sate down with them. Then the shepherd ran home and told his mistress he was sure that Thorstein was drowned at sea, for he had seen his apparition; and so the event proved."

"Why, it was like a scene in 'Robert le Diable,'" said I.

"Christianity was not introduced easily," resumed Darwin. "Olaf Tryggvessen began the task in Norway by summoning all the Enchanters (so called) to his Court, and inviting them to adopt the



new creed. When they declined, he gave them all a sumptuous dinner."

"That was kind," said Digwell, "at all events."

"Ay; but when they were well filled, and had drunken wine, and were fast asleep, he caused the doors to be locked, and the house set on fire. All the Enchanters were burnt except one Eyvindus, who, says the Chronicle, by the help of his hellish art, escaped out of the window. He afterwards met a servant of the King and had the impertinence to send a message to his Majesty that it was the last time he would ever dine with him."

"I cannot blame him. The Enchanters, at all events, had not the gift of prophecy."

"Olaf then caused all the Icelanders who happened seafaring men to be, in Norway, to be summoned before him, and he admonished them to become converts; but finding them very reluctant, he gave them the option of being baptised or having their arms and legs cut off."

"Why, the propagators of the Koran were gentle compared with your Olaf," said Digwell, who was the most humane of men, and could scarcely bear to see a ptarmigan killed, even for his dinner.

"He took strong measures, I confess. If not *suaviter in modo fortiter in re*—however, the Icelanders retained their legs and arms, and gradually the new creed supplanted the old. You remember what I told you at Thingvalla of the grand discussion that was held there, and how, in the middle thereof, a boy ran with the news that an eruption had taken place, and the lava was streaming down on the farm of Thorold, who exclaimed, 'The gods were angry at the new faith!' 'What were your gods about when all this old lava ran down?' retorted Snorri Curio."

"Very ready in debate Snorri was," said Mr. X——.

"There is a strange story of one Thidrand," continued Darwin. "Stopping at the house of Thor-

halls, he was warned whatever occurred during the night in the way of noise not to open the door. Hearing, at midnight, shouts, and thinking they might be the cries of distressed travellers, he went out to see. In the morning he was found mortally wounded, and had just time to tell his tale before he died. He had been met by nine women in black garments, on black steeds; against these rushed nine women in white garments, on white steeds: in the conflict he received his hurts. It was supposed that these were the genii of the old faith and of the new faith contending."

"Why, Thidrand," said I, "was like Mr. Pickwick between the two rival newspaper editors."

"Umbra," said Darwin, "know that ribaldry is not wit. Your remark is insulting if not profane."

"I meant no disrespect to any one," I replied, "not even to Thor. I remember hearing that Mr. Montague, at Rome, always took his hat off to the bust of Jupiter Capitolinus, saying he hoped Jupiter would remember, if he came into power again, that he had shown him civility in his adversity."

"I hate your rats!" said Mr. X——, sententially.

Darwin was now sunk in a deep reverie. "It might be found," said he to himself, "it might yet be found. If I could only show that stone at home what renown would be mine! More precious would it be than the black stone of the Caaba at Mecca. At all events I will make the endeavour."

"What stone are you talking of?"

"The stone of sacrifice."

"I have seen the Mexican stone of sacrifice," said Mr. X——, "on which thousands on thousands of victims were slaughtered during the Aztec sway. It is quite round and flat, with a groove from the centre to the side to carry off the victim's blood, and it is ornamented with strange hieroglyphics; and I rode my horse up the pyramid-palace of Xohicalco, a hill not unlike this in shape, but the wild cotton

tree now grows on the ruins, and when I cleared away the tangled brushwood that had crept over the terraces, I could see sculptured figures of gods and animals, somewhat resembling those on the Runic monuments which you are so fond of, Darwin."

"Upon your word? This is really becoming interesting. You have certainly seen a great deal, X——; what a pity it is you are so indolent!—I beg your pardon,"—for Mr. X—— slightly raised his hat—"I meant to say—so indisposed to read the Sagas. But I think I will make a circuit round Helgofell."

He soon disappeared. He returned late in the evening, bringing with him an enormous rock, which he said *might* be part of the Stone of Sacrifice; and he seemed to look forward with satisfaction to carrying it home, and raising a temple over it in England. The only objection to this was the strong probability of its breaking a pony's back before it reached Reykjavik. Indeed so impressed were some of the party with this vulgar idea, that I regret to say they clandestinely rolled the stone down the hill on which we were encamped, and England lost the benefit of this glorious monument of antiquity.

While Darwin was absent on his expedition a most memorable conversation took place in the tent, which I will record, but cannot even now explain the latter part. First of all, Digwell inquired of M'Diarmid whether the worship of the Celts was the same as that of the Scandinavians.

"It is a pity that Darwin has gone," answered M'Diarmid, "or he would have explained it all better than I can. The Celts were called Druids, because they held their rites in woods; yet not always so, for their circles of large stones are found in spots destitute of wood, and there is a certain similarity between them and the Scandinavian monuments. The most celebrated spots of Druid worship are Stonehenge, and the Clint Hills, in England; Karnak in Brittany."

"Karnak, in Egypt, have I seen," said Mr. X——, "opposite to *Dimidio magicæ resonant ubi Memnone chordæ*, which was a trick of the priests, striking a metallic stone; we tried it."

"Besides these," pursued M'Diarmid, "are in Scotland the stepping stones of Stennus, in the Orkneys, mentioned by Walter Scott, and the stones of Callenish, in the Lewes, muffled up to their waists in peat-moss."

"I have been there," said Mr. X——.

"And I too," said Lodbrog; "when we got to Carloway a lady was so hungry from want of her luncheon that she caught hold of me and shook me!"\*

"Poor lady!" sighed Digwell.

"That was a good view we got from the top of the hill this afternoon," said I, "over the fiordh and its countless isles. It reminded me of the grandest view I have ever obtained from the top of Etna, when I saw the shadow of the mountain thrown over the island."

"Describe, Umbra."

"I had gone up from Catania, and paid a visit to that hospitable old gentleman, Dr. Gemellaro, who made us drink some very good wine of his own growth—that is one advantage the Isle of Sicily has over that of Iceland."

"Sensualist!" interposed M'Diarmid.

"His thoughts by day, and dreams by night, are about his beloved Etna. Vesuvius he calls the *bambino* or baby-mountain. By his advice we started at night, in good time to see the sun rise next morning. After proceeding through oak forests and grassy uplands, we came to the steeper part of the hill, but there is an excellent mule-road, and in six hours we reached the Casa Inglese, where it was very cold, with snow on the ground. From this it is about an

\* At this distance of time, I cannot accurately remember whether this adventure happened to Lord Lodbrog or to Mr. X——.

hour's climb to the top of the crater. We arrived there just before the sun rose; the wind blew the thick smoke away and we had a clear view. What surprised me most, was that the horizon seemed high up in the sky."

"It must be so," said Digwell, "if you consider, mathematically, from the large portion of the surface of the earth your eye would take in from that elevation."

"To be sure we saw all round Sicily, and right over Calabria and the sea beyond, towards Greece; and then our guide took us quickly round to the other side of the crater, that we might see the shadow. At first I could not distinguish it, but he kept pointing to what I thought a large purple mountain opposite, and at last, after gazing intently, and making out villages, churches, fields, and rivers, I convinced myself that this seemingly palpable hill was in reality nothing else but the shadow of the mountain which we were on: it was a sight never to be forgotten. We returned well pleased to Nicolosi."

"And what did you with Dr. Gemellaro's thermometer?" asked Mr. X——.

I started with amazement. Was Mr. X—— a magician?

"Calm yourself, Umbra," said he, "I followed you down the mountain that morning. I saw and picked up the thermometer in the red case which you had dropped; I recognised it, and restored it to my friend Gemellaro."

I confess a secret load of many years was taken off my breast.

M'Diarmid wore a broad leather belt or baldric, fastened with an iron clasp, which gave him the appearance of belted Will Howard in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." I had long admired this unique article of dress, and now inquired of him where and how he had procured it.

"I will tell you," replied he, "though it recalls

the most sad event of my life, how long-cherished hopes were frustrated. You must know that for many years I had addicted myself to the pursuit of science, not so much to Geology, like our friend Digwell, as to magnetic influences, and to attempts to discover the true polarity of the earth."

"M'Diarmid," said Digwell, "I honour you. You recall to me the lines of the poet:

"Sinnend der Weise beshleicht forschend den schaffenden  
Geist  
Pruft der Stoffe gewalt, der Magnete hassen und lieben."

"I had been long in correspondence on this subject with the Universities of St. Petersburg, Stockholm, and Copenhagen, and at last I had arranged a method by which I thought I could obtain precise results; a suitable place was fixed on for taking the necessary observations.

"Some summers ago I started north myself to make inspection. I arrived at the Loffoden Islands, passing on the way the famous Maelstrom, which as a whirlpool is much exaggerated."

"All bosh!" said Mr. X——.

"I then crossed to the mainland, and proceeded north in company with a Swedish peasant, from whom I purchased this very belt. We walked on foot, and we did not sleep under any covering, or wallow in luxury as we do now."

"Oh, lord!" exclaimed Digwell.

"Why," said M'Diarmid, "are you not now drinking the choicest tea—7s. a pound? and did not your riot doom a lamb to bleed at the Geysers?"

"That," said Digwell, "was all but a fortnight ago."

"However, we carried some dried venison, and we slept in the clefts of the rocks, instead of this choice pavilion—for so I may call my tent. And on the 9th day we struck the Alten River, which runs through a fissure in that northern wilderness. Three

waterfalls precipitated themselves from the cliff, and after travelling over the barren Lapland fjelds the sight of the deep gorge through which the river flows, rich in verdure of the pine, the weeping birch, and the mountain ash, a combination of the darkest and tenderest hues, was inexpressibly beautiful. The river itself is clear as brown crystal."

"Yes," said Mr. X——, faintly.

"We joined some Laplanders in birch canoes, and shot down several rapids, not perhaps so large as those you have seen in Canada, X——, but still it was exciting. That night we slept under cover, in a sort of subterranean house excavated on the right bank of the river."

"On the left," said Mr. X——.

"Well, when I come to think of it, it is on the left; but it is amazingly odd you should guess it. Next day we reached the sea, and the next I crossed over to Kaafjord, which was the object of my journey. Hardly arrived, I rushed to the spot where all my hopes and fears were centred—not far from the abode of the Resident, and in his garden is a summer-house."

A deep groan from Mr. X——. We thought he was ill, but he said not.

"When the lady of the house, who was very charming and lovely, informed me that a horrible crime had been perpetrated, the authors of which to this day have never been discovered. I was told by the lady—Lady....."

"Malvina," said Mr. X——.

"You know her name?" said M'Diarmid; "you have been there? Stay! let me think—let me think! The two Englishmen present at the wedding! on whom suspicion never fell! eternal powers! do I now after many years see before me the destroyer of....."

Here M'Diarmid's hand instinctively sought the place where his dirk would have been had he worn the Highland garb. Meanwhile, Mr. X—— rose

from his recumbent position. It seemed to me there was rather deep sorrow than fear expressed on his countenance.

"No," said he, sadly, "my hand did not the deed; but listen. The revelry of the marriage-feast lasted long, and to escape it I stole out into the garden; it was near midnight, but the broad light of day was yet in the Lapland sky. I came on my friend, horrorstruck, in an agony of remorse, bending over a shattered frame, from the side of which trickled drop by drop, and slowly oozed into the grass, the subtle fluid which had so late given animating life to the form at his feet. I helped him to bury the mutilated remains. We hoped that earth would hide them, but I see all that is hidden will some day be divulged; it is the finger of Fate!"

"And you did not denounce the malefactor? You aided him to conceal the evidence of his crime? Oh, on him and his will descend to remote posterity the curse!"

"Forbear, M'Diarmid, forbear!" said X——, in a voice preternaturally solemn; "forbear, rash man, lest the curse you pronounce recoil on those nearest and dearest to you!"

M'Diarmid at first hardly seemed to take in the sense of these words; then he staggered. "Is it possible?" said he; and at last approached close to Mr. X——. You might have heard a pin drop on the grass, as they whispered interrogatively and affirmatively in monosyllables.

"The?"

"The."

"My?"

"Your."

"B.?"

"B."

"Is it possible?" mused M'Diarmid, "is it possible? Yet there has always been a strange reticence on William's part when I have talked of the Alten.



Had I known this could I have placed in the hand of the destroyer the hand of....."

"Be not too hard on William," said Mr. X——; "the blow was struck from inadvertence, not design. Enough!" and folding his plaid round him, like Cæsar at Pompey's statue, he sank back on his saddle. M'Diarmid walked out and paced to and fro before the tent. Methinks I see him now, beneath the hill of the heathen god.

I looked at Mr. X—— with astonishment. He seemed to me a sort of Wandering Jew; but he was already fast asleep—his conscience disturbed him not.

Presently the clattering hoofs of a horse were heard, and Darwin rode up thundering at fullest speed. Behind him toiled two men bearing with difficulty the stone of sacrifice.

He dismounted, and held long conversation with M'Diarmid, who apparently communicated what he had just heard. Darwin was evidently much affected and wrung his hands; they both pointed frequently to the north. At last they came into the tent.

The first opportunity I had I took Darwin aside.

"Oh, Mr. Darwin, what does it all mean? Did Mr. X—— really see a murder?"

"A murder, you silly Umbra! What do you mean?"

"The mutilated form?"

"Pooh, pooh! it is much worse. You don't suppose M'Diarmid would be so affected for the death of a Lap or two! Why, the northern warriors generally took head-money as compensation. Gudrun took compensation for the murder of Sigurd; to be sure, she afterwards killed her two children by her next husband, Atli, King of Hunnia (not to be confounded with Attila, the Hun, I think—Mem. to look up this when I get back), and she burnt her husband too. I hope M'Diarmid will not set fire to Lowndes Street, and burn his—no, I think he is too good-hearted for that."

"But the blood trickling on the grass?"

"Pooh, pooh! it was not blood! it was much worse—much worse! But you must be silent—it must never be mentioned! never! never! never!"

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## CHAPTER VII.

ON our march next day, passing through a dry water-course, we noticed a quantity of jasper, lying in all directions around us. As we observed, we might have made our fortunes could we have shipped a cargo to England, but the same objection which prevailed against the transport of the soi-disant Stone of Sacrifice held good against the jasper, and we only filled our pockets much heavier than was pleasant. And now came we to a singular scene: a vast river of lava had run from a neighbouring mountain to the sea, much as the lava has coursed down from Etna to Catania; through this winds for a mile a well-planned smooth road, concerning which exists a tradition. It seems that two Berserkers, brothers, were anxious to obtain for one of them the daughter of a neighbour chief in marriage. Whether the elder had priority, or whether they were to toss up, I do not know. The father, afraid of offending two men of prowess, gave his consent, but enacted as a condition that they should first make a road through this lava in a week's time, which he judged an impossibility. At it the Berserkers went, with the skill of modern navvies, and completed the road within the appointed time. Invitations to the wedding were accordingly despatched to friends and relatives. The father of the lady proposed to the Berserkers to take a warm bath before they went to church, to which proposal they gladly assented. The nice clean Berserkers! I declare I quite feel for them—for what did the arch-villain of a father-in-law do? He

turned on the hot water cock, and presently one of the brothers was a boiled Berserker! The other, severely scalded, broke through the barred door of the bath-room in naturalibus, but only to slip on the raw hide of a new-slain bull, placed there in anticipation of an attempt to escape, and as he lay in that recumbent position a spear was ruthlessly thrust through his back. What the bride thought of the whole affair history does not mention, but what seems sad, though not at all strange, is that the treacherous murderer, being successful, was very much applauded by the whole country for what he had done. Perhaps he had a testimonial presented to him in consequence, and a flattering address, but of this I am not sure.

Musing on the melancholy fate of these predecessors of McAdam, we passed through the trace of their labours, and emerging from the walls of lava, cantered over bogs and meadows till we came to a gorge, renowned through Iceland as the Goblin's Pass.

I had intended to describe the Goblin's Pass to the best of my poor ability; but, on reflection, I think I will leave it alone. A precipitous mountain road, clouds and broken rainbows hovered over it—let that suffice. Later, we came to the Gruner Fiordh, where majestic mountains rise in terraces of trap (so I learned from Digwell). One tall hill reminded me of Ben Sullivan, alias the sugar-loaf, in Sutherland. Here was a factory, and, our provisions running low, we bought some biscuits which had been left three years before by a French smack. They were so hard that they could only be broken by Digwell's geological hammer; but when masticated, tasted not at all bad.

The following day we came to the Bulandshofoi, a pass which possesses an evil reputation as the most dangerous in all Iceland. We were warned that a yawning precipice of a thousand feet descended to the sea, which would in all probability receive the falling

traveller. But all this was much exaggerated; for though the cliff was steep below, and the rocks rose high above, the track itself was excellent. I can imagine that in the Spring, when the avalanches descend, the road may be impassable, but at the time I speak of, it was smooth, though certainly not so broad, as Hammersmith highway.

O my steed, my chesnut steed! with erect mane, like a horse on a frieze of the Parthenon Marbles. I rode thee that day, and not the piebald! I had all confidence in thee, beloved steed! why did I ever part with thee?

So, baggage and all, we safely passed Bulandshofoi, and anon descended to a shingly beach, where the stones were piled up in a vast rampart, when came on a smart shower, and the shower increased to a storm, and the storm to a cataract, when we arrived at the factory of Olafsvik, most fortunately for us!—the tent would have been carried away like a feather in the hurricane that now prevailed. Even M'Diar-mid, who had vowed he would not sleep out of his tent in Iceland, gave up the idea, and we all sought the refuge of the house, where we received hospitable entertainment. The host was previously in a state that would have fitted him to act admirably the part of Count Almaviva at the close of the second act of the Barber of Seville.

Was it here, or was it not, that we met our excellent friend Jonson of Copenhagen? It was not here, neither is Jonson his real name, but he is too remarkable a person to be omitted, and I will put him in here.

Mr. Jonson is one of the most active and intelligent men I know, very amiable "au fond," and would go great lengths to do you a service, but he has a peculiar talent for finding out every person's weak point and rubbing them on the raw. First he reviewed Mr. Darwin's theory of Sandinavian Antiquities, and, though the conversation was carried on in an unknown tongue, I could see that Darwin winced. Then he

spoke English, and satisfactorily proved to M'Diarmid that Ossian was an impostor. Poor M'Diarmid! it was the only time I ever saw him subdued. Thirdly, he proceeded to Mr. X——, whom we all supposed to be quite impervious; but Jonson found out an open joint in his harness in no time.

"So you have left England, Mr. X——," said he, before Parliament was prorogued? Questions of great importance may be coming on—eh?"

Mr. X—— stated that the Session was nearly over, and nothing of importance expected.

"Who can tell that, eh?" returned Jonson. "But you have got leave to come, eh?"

Mr. X—— explained that it was not necessary to ask leave.

"Ah, not of the House! but you told your Whip you were going, eh?—you call him Whip, don't you?"

Mr. X—— grew pale and was silent.

"At all events you have got a pair, eh?"

M. X—— gave a deep groan, rushed away, and hid himself.

Miserable man! it came out at last—extorted by Jonson—that he had come away without a pair. Perhaps in the silent hours of the night this reflection haunted him; perhaps he saw visionary Divisions going the wrong way, and heard the name of him absent pronounced reproachfully!

But with respect to Digwell I really consider Jonson's conduct was quite fiendish. He found out poor Digwell's weakness, his craving for chops and other unattainable comforts, and with an air of false, pretended sympathy held out a delusive series of tantalising dainties. I may add that Jonson himself was a sort of man who would just as soon have dined off rusty nails like an ostrich as have feasted at *Les Trois Frères Provençaux*.

"Ah, Mr. Digwell," said he, "it is a hard thing, a very hard thing to travel in a country like this, where one can barely obtain a mouthful of food. Now in

Italy you might order a dish of ortolans or beccaficoes."

Digwell's mouth watered.

"Or in France a good fricandeau and poulet à Marengo."

Digwell sighed heavily.

"Or in England, better still, Mr. Digwell—in England you might be now sitting down to a sirloin of beef and Yorkshire pudding."

Digwell could stand it no longer; he gave a loud howl of anguish, while Jonson surveyed him with the air of Mephistophiles triumphant.

On Lord Lodbrog alone the latter could produce no effect. Regner possessed such a happy fund of good spirits that Jonson's attempts to depress them only fell off like rain from a duck's back.

At Olafsvik, however, Mr. Digwell had no occasion to complain, as we fared sumptuously, and were after dinner all six conducted to a room with six beds, arranged like berths on board ship, one over the other, where we slept while the tempest raged without.

The morrow, the storm had spent its force, and as towards noon the clouds broke and it cleared, we took our departure. Retracing our steps of yesterday some way, we struck to the right and ascended a steep path on the east side of Snaefell, the giant of these parts. Snaefell has never been ascended, and it was a question with us whether the conquerors of Eyrik's Jokul should attempt his impregnability or not. I rather suspect all had had enough that day of climbing in the snow, and that counsels of inglorious ease would have now prevailed, but it was settled for us by the weather. Snaefell was veiled in a cloud, and all the time we were close to him we never saw him at all, but were obliged to be content with the distant view we had had of him, three weeks before, from Reykjavik.

And we mounted higher, and a waterfall flung itself grandly over some basaltic columns. Even

Mr. X—— was forced to admire this fall, which, he said, reminded him of Regla, though he entered his protest against waterfalls in general, to the effect that, after seeing Niagara, they were audacious swindles and over-puffed nuisances.

After passing some pasture-land, we again mounted by the steepest path I remember anywhere for horses; it seemed as if we were going up like Jack up his beanstalk. We soon got to the clouds and entered a mist worthy of Scotland, so dense one could scarcely see the pony's ears. However, we knew by this time how well our ponies deserved confidence, and we clomb up to the top of the pass (which by the map I take to have been over a spur of Snaefell), and then we descended as rapidly on the south side. In time we left the mist, and saw stretched below us the sea and the level plain, having gained which we turned to the right.

We could now ride abreast and talk a bit.

"Upon my word," said Darwin, "Jonson was too bad last night, going on as he did to M'Diarmid about Ossian; he scarcely showed the respect due to him. Did you ever see the Gaelic Ode addressed to M'Diarmid by Phelim Phaidrig, the Highland Bard? It is magnificent—it begins thus:

"Thou son of him who slew the boar,  
Who by the boar himself was slain."

"Well, Diarmid was not the only man that ever died by a bore," said Mr. X——. "I have been nearly killed by one myself once or twice."

"In Barbary?"

"No; in Westminster!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" shouted Darwin; "you are waxing facetious are you? Is Saul among the prophets?"

"My name is Paul, not Saul," said Mr. X——, gravely.

"Look there!" cried Digwell.

We looked up and saw what appeared the sem-

blance of a castle on the flank of the mountain—wall, battlement and barbican, keep and towers, so completely had Nature in her caprice moulded her work into the likeness of man's architecture.

"It must be the castle of Utgard Loki," said Darwin, "where he deluded Thor. We are on enchanted ground—we shall become the heroes of a Saga. It must be an illusion. See! it vanishes from our sight!"

"As we ride on, we change our view of it," said M'Diarmid sagaciously. "Ride back a little and you will see it again."

Mr. Digwell here recited to an indescribable tune, if for tune he meant it:

"Hast thou seen the stately Castle, the Castle by the sea?  
Rose and golden clouds float o'er it, a gorgeous canopy.

"Wall and buttress all are mirror'd in the crystal flood below,  
And the turrets seem to mingle with the sunset's crimson glow.

"Yes, I have seen the Castle, the proud Castle by the sea—  
The moon shone on it with dim gleam, the mist clung mournfully.

"The winds and waves were they at play? did they gladsome  
music make?  
And from the hall burst revelry? did the festal song awake?

"The winds were hush'd, the waves were still, they had forgot  
to throb,  
And from the hall came dirgelike strains, and heard I many a  
sob.

"Upon the ramparts didst thou see the Monarch and his  
Queen,  
Conspicuous with their crowns of gold and purple mantles'  
sheen?

"And gazed they tenderly upon a Maiden wondrous fair,  
Fair as the Sun on Summer morn, glanced bright her golden  
hair?

"I saw the Parents twain in sooth, but they wore no crown  
of gold,  
They were in sable garments clad—no Maid did I behold."



"Very pretty, Digwell; very pretty. Are those your own?"

"Dear me, no—a translation of Uhland. I was in Germany once and like their ballads.

"Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten  
Dass ich so traurig bin  
Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten  
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.

"Die Luft ist kühl, und es dunkelt  
Und ruhig fliesst der Rhein.....

Ah, yes! it is pleasant after a right jolly good dinner to float down the Rhine, in the soft twilight, when the purple shadows from the purple mountains are reflected on the river; then the cadence of the German lieder falls in dreamlike music on the ear."

"You get very bad tobacco in Germany," said Mr. X——.

"I once made an original poem on the Rhine," said Digwell.

"Why, you meet Byron on his own ground," said I.

"I don't think I am so great a poet as Byron," returned Digwell, modestly; "but we don't clash. Would you like to hear it? What are you saying about 'Non Di, non homines,' Mr. X——?"

"Nothing, my dear Digwell. Pray proceed."

"You see, I begin at the beginning, from its very source in the Rheinwald."

"And go all the way to Rotterdam?" I asked.

"Exactly. I make the river speak himself."

"'Rhenus loquitur;' that is more than the Thames does, when he comes on the stage between his banks in the 'Critic.' But go on."

"Where the soft snow drops  
On the high hill tops  
Does the shining glacier lie  
On the crowning crag,  
Like a silvery flag  
Unfurl'd between earth and sky.

Still day by day  
 As it melts away  
 It is fed from the cloudy heaven,  
 In its dark-blue womb  
 In that silent tomb  
 To me is my life-blood given.  
 From its icy cave  
 Leaps my tiny wave,  
 Like the spray of a passing shower,  
 And men laugh with glee,  
 Who my childhood see,  
 When they muse on my might and power.

“ Well, you see, I have started it on its journey;  
 and then I come to the Via Mala on the Splügen :

“ Through the Pass of Fear  
 In swift career  
 My growing strength I pour ;  
 With many a spasm,  
 Through the cloven chasm  
 I writhe, and I shriek, and roar !  
 In the darksome hour,  
 When the rain-clouds lower,  
 My gathering waters swell ;  
 In the black abyss,  
 Where they tortured hiss,  
 They against their curb rebel.  
 Ere now I have risen  
 From my rocky prison,  
 As the tiger awakes from sleep,  
 In my fury then  
 The abodes of men  
 Like reeds from my path I sweep.”

“ Ah ! ” said I, “ I know what you allude to, Dig-  
 well—the great storm, when the post-master of  
 Thusis was drowned. But go on.”

“ As a sinful child,  
 With passion wild,  
 Repents on his mother’s breast,  
 I cease to fret,  
 And my strife forget,  
 In the calm lake lull’d to rest—  
 The calm blue lake  
 That its name does take

From Constance' city gray—  
 Thence all purified  
 Escapes my tide  
 With the gleam of the sapphire's ray.  
 With thundering shock,  
 O'er Schaffhausen's rock  
 I my azure column shiver,  
 Then speed I forth  
 To the distant North  
 As the world's most famous river."

"Now that won't do, Digwell," said Mr. X——; "why the Rhine is a little brook compared with the American rivers."

"But I speak of historic associations, not of magnitude," returned Digwell.

"The Nile whips it hollow, sir, in that respect."

"Suppose I say 'Europe's most famous river'?"

"There is the Danube," said Darwin.

"The Tweed," said M'Diarmid.

"The Thames," said I.

"The Isis," said Lodbrog.

"The Medina," said Mr. X——.

"Well, I will think of it afterwards," said Digwell, dismayed. "But now I embody in my poem one hundred and forty two legends of castles on the Rhine."

"Good heavens, Digwell! we are not going to spend the winter in Iceland! You had better leave them out."

"What, the Cat and the Mouse and Bishop Hatto's Tower?"

"Yes; drop them all."

"And don't you wish to hear how the Syren fair combed her golden hair, as a German professor explained to me before I could speak German, by producing a very dirty comb from his pocket and passing it through his greasy locks?"

"No; leave her alone."

"Well, we come to Baccharach—Bacchi Ara, that is. Ah! the trouble I had to get in all the rhymes

about the wines!—Hochheimer, and Rudesheimer, and Asmanhausen, and.....”

“ You had better drop all that too; as we have no wine to drink here, it would be tantalising to hear them all recited.”

“ Well, I have a touch at history, and I record the various races that succeeded one another :

“ In the days of old  
Did the hunter bold  
Here the bison's track pursue :  
Upon my bank,  
O'er the legion's rank,  
Rome's imperial eagle flew ;  
The Robber-Knight,  
In armour bright,  
From his eyry stonghold sallied,  
Until allied  
'Gainst lawless pride  
The Teuton Burghers rallied ;  
And war's fierce game,  
Though changed, the same,  
Has been veil'd 'neath the hanging smoke,  
When the cannon's roar  
Along my shore  
Oft the slumbering echoes woke.”

“ I tell you what, Digwell: you ought to bring in how the Army of Liberation shouted when they got their first glimpse of the Rhine—that was a fine passage in history.”

“ I have been puzzled,” said Digwell, “ to know what to do about the steamboats; they are a sign of modern civilization, and steam rhymes to stream, still steamboats are not romantic.”

“ Certainly not — eschew them. Is there any more?”

“ And with me blend  
The streams that descend  
From many a vale and plain,  
They tribute pay  
And I cleave my way  
Through the mountains rent in twain.

I rush on—on,  
 Till my goal be won,  
 With a giant's strength I flee!  
 In old age I creep  
 Ere I fall asleep  
 In the arms of the mightier sea."

"Stop!" said Darwin, "flee is not good English; it ought to be flow."

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth," pleaded Digwell.

"Well, let the Rhine be wicked. Proceed."

"The feudal towers  
 And palace bowers  
 And the poor man's cot I lave;  
 The white-wall'd town  
 And the fortress' frown  
 All are mirror'd in my wave.  
 The gorgeous fane....."

Thus far had proceeded Digwell, when, in the excitement of the moment, he let his whip, with which he had been gesticulating, pointing the action to the verse, fall smartly on his pony's side. The pony, surprised by this sudden stroke of poetry, showed his appreciation of it by a lively kick, and the Duke of Marlborough's saddle, which was much too large and sate loosely on the pony's back, turning round, the poet in the midst of his declamation was capsized and came to the ground; fortunately he was not at all hurt.

"Why, this is bathos indeed!" said Mr. X——.

"I was just getting to Cologne Cathedral," said poor Digwell.

"Well, never mind the Cathedral, and the three Kings, and the bad smells of Cologne. But, my dear Digwell, you deserve a reward for your poetry. In early Greece, as you are aware, the prize to the successful poet was a goat—whence comes the word tragedy."

"I would rather have a sheep," said Digwell;

"goat cutlets are very tough—however, I could manage one now."

"The Romans rewarded their bards with a crown of laurel, which was ironical, because the laurel is a barren tree that produces no fruit. But to you, my dear Digwell, I award this cake of chocolate. Chocolate, I presume you are aware, is derived from Chocola, a village in Mexico, as jalap takes its name from the beautiful town of Jalapa."

"I wish you would not talk to me about jalap, Mr. X——; the mention of it makes me feel quite queer. However, I am much obliged to you for the chocolate; it is really very good."

After fording three or four torrents, we reached Stapi.

Stapi, if it be possible that any one is ignorant of the fact, is celebrated for basalt. The tide rushes into basaltic caverns, and into circular inland cavities (resembling, I should imagine, the Buller of Buchan, which I have not seen) lined with basaltic columns. In one or two places we observed columns lying horizontally, like logs of timber, piled one over another. I took particular notice of this, because I had heard that the Isle of Handa, off Sutherland, was the only place in the world where basalt was horizontal and not vertical.

Stapi, the extreme western point of Iceland, and therefore of Europe, consists of rather a large village of wretched hovels tenanted by fishermen, who put to sea when the weather allows it. At the time of our visit their boats were drawn up high in the cove, the winds came howling from America, the sea was very gurlly, tumbling with hoarse noise into the caves, and the seamews were flitting about restless, chanting, or rather clanging, a doleful ditty. I should say Stapi was a spot admirably adapted for the retreat of a wealthy alderman who had suffered from excess of comfort and good living—at least such was my impression.

Our provisions were now exhausted; and that

night the wind blew and the rain descended. It seemed very doubtful whether the tent, though secured by our boxes and huge stones as additional makeweights, would stand against the force of the wind. The tent shook like a reed; still it stood gallantly, but in the middle of the night I was awoke by finding myself lying in a pool of water, which had somehow accumulated; and all the rest of the night the rain, soaking through the canvass, slowly trickled drop by drop on my face.

Now I am not a Sybarite, but I boldly maintain this is not pleasant, and I observed as much to Mr. X——, who was next me. I think he must have had a malicious pleasure in my misfortune, or he piqued himself on showing superior philosophy in a similar plight, or he was happy in being able to bring out two quotations, for first he informed me that the Spaniards had had a “triste noche” in Mexico, and therefore it was reasonable that we should have one in Iceland—and then declaiming

“Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit,”

he turned over and fell asleep. I hated him!

The morning came, cold and gusty; and it speaks tomes for the inflexibility of Scotch morality, that, though we knew there was comfortable shelter at Budir, three hours' distance, M'Diarmid refused to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath by travelling. He proposed to us all to go on, and to rejoin us next morning, but we were unwilling to divide the party; and with, I fear, small power of taking credit to ourselves for scrupulous observance of the day, stopped at Stapi.

I regretted to observe the incipient ravages made by famine in the person of Mr. Digwell. Hitherto he had been the most active of any, setting out the first thing in the morning and the last at night to geologise and inspect lakes. But now he positively refused to go and look at the inland cavities, assigning the extraordinary reason that basalt was only fit

for ladies! That ladies are cleverer than men I will admit, but why they are to have basalt exclusively reserved for them I have never been able to conjecture.

Darwin and Lord Lodbrog abandoned that night the wet tent to sleep in a hovel. Next morning we left Stapi—Stapi, the extreme point of our journey as of Europe. Three hours of quick riding brought us to the factory of Budir. We met there another traveller who had arrived from an opposite direction. He was an Iceland gentleman, with a pleasant, good-natured countenance, and his name I found afterwards was Thorlásseus. We exchanged a few words of courteous greeting; when, on hearing the name Darwin more than once pronounced, he inquired if any of us were related to the great Darwin, the celebrated author.

I think my friend never could have felt sincerer rapture, when unbuttoning his P-coat and displaying thereby the Order of the Walrus, he answered modestly, "I, sir, am that Darwin whom you are pleased to call great."

Thorlásseus started, so great was his surprise. "O friend!" exclaimed he, "for so must I call thee—O thou, dear to the heart of every true Scandinavian! do I see thee? do I hear thee? do I embrace thee? it is too much!"

They then retired, and during our half-hour's stay they discoursed of Harolds, Hacos, Sinjotlis, familiarly

"As maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs."

The hospitable merchant expressed regret at not having seen us before; but as we refused to stay, by way of stirrup-cup made us quaff a libation of egg-flip.

We rode the greater part of the day along the sea-coast, but towards evening we had to turn inland and came to dreadful bogs. It was very late when we came in sight of the church of Miklaholt, which stands on an eminence; but we could not make



straight for it, but had to stalk it, as the sportsman on Scottish hills stalks the stag. For miles around were morasses:

“A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog  
Betwixt Damietta and Mount Casius old,  
Where armies whole have sunk.”

At one moment I was surprised at seeing nothing but the ears and neck of my horse, the rest of his body being submerged. Fortunately I extricated myself quick from the saddle, or we should both be there now. A narrow causeway of rough, loose stones exists in places; which, detestable as it is to ride on abstractedly, is the only chance of safety. Along this the traveller “pursues his way, and swims or sinks, or wades or creeps.” Woe be to him if he strays on inch from this track! his horse flounders hopelessly in the quagmire.

At length we gained the rising ground whereon the church of Miklaholt had long been conspicuous. The rain fell in torrents, and we were glad to accept the clergyman’s proposal that we should bivouac in the church. This sounds sacrilegious, but in Iceland where there are no inns, the church is always the traveller’s refuge; so we arranged our saddles and wraps in the pews, and, after cooking and enjoying a frugal dinner, we took our rest.

I here discovered a curious fact about Mr. X——, which accounted for that gentleman’s occasional readiness in making a quotation. Every night he wrapped himself in a large gray plaid, of which he was very proud; it had been, he said, his companion in the mountains of Mexico. I now happened to examine some scarlet letters on the plaid, and to my amazement discovered whole passages from Shakespeare and other poets embroidered in red silk. In fact Mr. X—— slept in a book, and could always refresh his memory by study when he woke. I inquired of him where he acquired this valuable

repertory of knowledge, but he preserved an obstinate silence.

If I thought Miklaholt disagreeable at night, I thought it detestable next morning.

“ It stands between the mountains and the sea :”

but to get to either you must cross that abominable bog, wading along the causeway knee-deep in water. I might almost go so far as to say that there is

“ Water, water everywhere,  
Yet not a drop to drink,”

for there is no spring or well, and it was with some difficulty that I scooped up enough to fill a glass to wash my teeth. But what annoyed me most was that these excellent people (for such they were) must needs be patriots. They were not discontented, as they ought to have been, but said they were fond of Miklaholt. Why, forsooth? No one will ever guess why. They said the vile bog produced such good butter!

Good butter! Gods of our heathen ancestry—Thor, Odin, and the rest of Darwin’s friends—she positively gave good butter as her reason! Good butter is a good thing, no doubt—far be it from me to disparage it; but is good butter a sufficient compensation for living segregated from the rest of mankind? for being cut off from the whole civilised community? for dwelling in a spot unapproachable, save at the risk of death—that death not by honest drowning, but by semi-aqueous suffocation?

However, I forget myself; it is no affair of mine—none whatever—so farewell, Miklaholt, and may your inhabitants prosper, though I wish never to see you again. I have left you and am climbing up the extinct volcano of Elborg, the crater of which rises a black, stumpy excrescence from the plain—which plain is covered for leagues with rough lava, so rough indeed that we failed in our first attempt to cross it, but harking back made rather a clever cast, and

gaining the foot of the crater fastened our horses and ascended. Inside of the lip I repose very comfortably, out of the wind, and look down on the hollow, almost circular, and smooth with grass. I feel rather sleepy, and fancy I am peeping down on a gigantic theatre, as a Roman of the baser sort might have done, perched in the upper galleries of the Colosseum or the great playhouse at Verona, and below me are the gladiators fighting. Retiarius throws his net and is pursued by Secutor, and the unarmed Christians are condemned to face ravenous wild beasts, amid the jeers of that vile Roman populace—the populace of the Empire—and the arena swims with blood. Lo! a youth approaches me, with face pale but resolute. He has the semblance of Regner Lodbrog: it is he. Awake, Umbra! awake! You are not at Rome, not at Verona, but at Elborg, in Iceland, and you must ride to-night to Hitterdal.

And soon my chesnut steed carried me to the entrance of Hitterdal, the fairest of Iceland's valleys, and there we rode over lawn-like turf, between ramparts of lava; and above us towered mountains of lava, fused into fantastic shapes, whence the rocks have taken the names of human creatures, though to my eye they bore more resemblance to the uncouth colossal gods of Egypt.

\* \* \* \* \*

How lovely she was!—the lady of Hitterdal—not of a stately and aristocratic beauty, but of a beauty such as most commands a child's admiration—such as we read in a fairy tale: the forehead and neck really white as snow, the cheek the brilliant red that mantles on a particular kind of apple, her golden hair the hue of the sunbeams, partially concealed under the usual black Iceland cap which, with its silver tassel, hung jauntily on one side.....but she scarcely looked at Umbra.

Darwin admired this young lady excessively: he

said she reminded him of Svanhild, daughter of Sigurd. He learned, moreover, that her father had been a Skald, or bard, in the land, and his enthusiasm knew no bounds; but on comparing notes, a serious difference of opinion rose between them on some point touching Iceland minstrelsy. They disputed—the controversy waxed warm—fast as Darwin talked, the lady talked faster. At last, to one of his assertions she only responded with a scornful laugh. I thought it sounded very pretty and silvery; but on Darwin the effect was awful—what he, the great Darwin, challenged on his own ground! He wiped his forehead. Later, she filled up the measure of her offence. Lodbrog and Darwin had both bought two sealskin bags, which the Icelanders call their souls, as in travelling they contain all that is precious to them.\* Darwin had also procured from the peasantry some very curious ancient Icelandic ornaments which they were ready to sell. With great courtesy, and with generous forgetfulness of her Skaldic victory, he offered her the choice of two brooches, if she wished to become the purchaser of either. With the same

\* Part of this narrative having appeared before in print, I learned with the greatest regret that doubts have been entertained in some quarters respecting its entire truth. To remove these I thought I could not do better than write to Lord Lodbrog and Mr. X——, asking them if they would produce the “souls” in evidence—for after the events detailed in the last chapter, Mr. X—— appropriated to himself the sealskin of Darwin (Mr. X—— *says* he bought it of Darwin and paid for it, but that it is not the custom to give or take receipts in Iceland). The distance and uncertainty of communication have prevented my obtaining a reply from Lord Lodbrog; but I have received a very angry, intemperate letter from Mr. X——. First, he complains of gross breach of confidence on my part. Secondly, he says I have described his character quite wrongly, and that he could have talked much more if he had chosen, but that he did not choose. However, he does me the justice to say that all the main facts are correctly stated, and that if any persons doubt them, he is quite ready to show them his “soul,” which he still possesses, in corroboration of my history, any time they like to call on him.

delightful ringing laugh, she thanked him and said she must have both. This was too much.

"They are all the same," whispered he to me. "Gudrun and Brynhildir went to wash their hair in the Rhine. You would have thought the Rhine big enough for any two women to wash their hair in, but it was not—most unreasonable; they must needs go and quarrel about which had the best place. And what was the consequence? Murder, sir! fratricide, sir! infanticide, sir! conjugicide, sir!"

"Don't, Mr. Darwin! pray don't! I declare you quite frighten me," said I.

"And then there was poor Gunnar."

"What of him?"

"His wife Hallgerda got him into so many scrapes that he was warned his life was not safe if he remained in Iceland, but he could not tear himself away. One day his enemies surrounded his house; when he had shot eight, his bowstring broke, and he requested Hallgerda to give him one of her long curls to fit to the bow."

"And she gave it like a lady of Carthage?" said Lodbrog.

"She asked if his life absolutely depended on it. 'Absolutely,' said he. 'Then you will please to remember that you gave me a box on the ear three years ago,' retorted his spouse. And Gunnar was killed before her face."

This anecdote made a deep impression.

"Revenge is sweet, especially to women," said Digwell.

"But he should not have boxed her ears," said Lodbrog.

"Manet altâ mente repostum," said Mr. X——.

"Mrs. Jonathan Wild," said I.

"A highland wife would not have acted so," said M'Diarmid.

Darwin said no more, but shook his head like Lord Burghleigh, and stood with folded arms, looking upwards.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night the Northern Streamers played in the sky with pellucid lustre. Wavering, flickering, radiating, the silver light took ever-varying shapes, and now it hangs like a transparent shroud in the heavens. Was it an omen?

\* \* \* \* \*

We started in the morning, and, for the first time, Lord Lodbrog seemed pensive, and I gained from him the secret of his melancholy. He had sworn, at different times, to six different ladies, that he would bring them home the plumage of the great auk, to decorate their respective hats. Now I believe the great auk possessed very little plumage, being a sort of hyperborean dodo. But, beyond this, another serious difficulty presented itself. The great auk was nowhere to be discovered. The last of his race was seen at the beginning of the century, winging his way, singed from the eruption of a volcano, which, differing as he did in constitution from his cousin, the phoenix, had not agreed with him. He was seen to make for an isle in the sea, and, from that day, was seen no more. In vain I attempted to comfort Regner, by advising him to lay before the six a candid statement of these facts. It would not do. How could Regner present himself in England forsworn?

One of the chief attractions in Iceland travelling is the intense brightness of colour. I have before mentioned the vivid clearness of the atmosphere, but even when the sky is clouded brilliant hues surround. Yonder hill of green grass, mixed with red, seems a mountain of blooming heather, but the scarlet tints are of burnt scoria. Often and often have I thought that the sun was shining partially on distant hill-tops, and only after closer observation could bring myself to be convinced that the apparent sunshine was fawn-coloured ash or sand, and that the seeming shadow with which it contrasted was dark gray pumice-stone.

We slept at Bordhal, and next morning girded ourselves to pass the broad Hvita. We had thought it would be necessary to take the luggage over in a ferry-boat and swim the horses over, but a farmer engaged to show us a ford, and as this saved a detour of some hours, we entrusted ourselves to his guidance.

He accordingly took us to a spot near the junction of the Hvita and Noropa, and boldly our cavalcade plunged into the broad stream, which flowed at a rapid pace, and bravely our horses breasted the force of the current. Every now and then it seemed impossible they could maintain their footing and must swim for it;

“ But by good heart and our Lady’s grace,  
We gained at length the landing-place ”

with very little wetting. We then forded the Noropa, and bidding our guide adieu, with hearty thanks, we rode on, and encamped that night in a bitter cold wind, on the borders of the Hval Fiordh, in front of the Promontory of Akranesr.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

PLEASANT it is at the close of a long journey to arrive and take your ease at an inn. Then stand you before a blazing fire, sniff the coming repast and complacently repeat to yourself Shenstone’s verses. Our situation was the reverse of this. Cold and hungry we pitched the tent, after in vain searching for a place where it would be sheltered from the cutting wind. And now the fact was brought home to us that we were without any provisions. The last links were broken that had once made the biscuit-box precious in our sight, and the last morsel of beloved bacon had disappeared long ago at Stapi. A little soup was served out to each. Lodbrog

looked pale and wan, but showed the courage of his race and disdained to complain. Darwin tried to fortify himself with the recollection that Harold Harfagra had once on a marauding expedition been as hard put to it; but there was a wolfish expression in his eye that would have made it dangerous for a live sheep to cross his path.

"Ah!" said he good humouredly, "if we had only Frodi's wishing quern, as in the old Norse story, it would grind for us fish, meat, bread and ale—whatever we pleased."

On which Mr. X——, whose memory abstinence seemed to stimulate, began to quote Shakespeare.

"Oh! who can hold a fire in his hand  
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?  
Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite  
By bare imagination of a feast?"

M'Diarmid alone recognised with unqualified approbation that the party were now put on what he considered proper rations—namely, Spartan black broth; but seeing us all look rather glum at his views of Lacedæmonian legislation, he said it was foolish of him he knew, but he would compassionate our unworthy weakness—that foreseeing some might be disposed to grumble at wholesome asceticism, he had reserved a *bonne bouche* for us, a delicacy the existence of which he had hitherto kept a strict secret, and he now volunteered to produce it. At this there was a shout, and a smile beamed on Digwell's countenance like the first ray of the sun when he reappears above the horizon after the arctic winter.

M'Diarmid went out to his boxes and presently returned with a large, hard, dried half of a fish, which had been caught and cured some two years previously. He entreated us not to partake too freely of this dainty, it being liable to one objection, that it was apt to breed worms in the Icelanders who indulged in it. But his warning was quite superfluous—the smell was enough to knock one



backwards! it quickly permeated the whole tent, from which Mr. X—— rushed out, quoting as he went

“It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh  
Which some did die to look on;”

and Darwin exclaimed “Thorsteinus Thorskabitus come again!” Digwell was now desperate: suddenly a thought struck him—he pulled off both his boots and examined them with glaring eye. Unfortunately they had been every morning besmeared with a certain grease, called Clark’s Inimitable Repellent, in order to make them waterproof: that morning they had had an extra application before fording the Hvita. The inimitable repellent answered its proper purpose well enough, but had made the boots quite unfit for an article of food. Digwell’s last hope failed him, and he sank back resigned to his fate. M’Diarmid began to clean his gun, and Lodbrog to look over the feathers of some birds he had shot, and wonder whether he could pass them off as part of the plumage of the great auk.

I strolled out. When we first arrived in Iceland there was hardly any night, but now the days had much shortened and it was bright starlight. I found Mr. X—— wrapped up in his lettered plaid, his head on a lava pillow, and smoking his pipe with great determination. I thought he looked too comfortable, and it irritated me, for I believed him to be a Big-Indian—that is, an Epieurean—at heart. Though not at all a wit himself, in London he drank champagne with the wits, and I felt sure he did not like going without any dinner; but the innate vanity of the man always prevented him from expressing surprise or discomposure at anything. So I sate down by him and said—

“You take things coolly, Mr. X——.”

“Sir,” he replied, “do you remember what Cato, the Censor, said, as quoted by Aulus Gellius?”

“I know nothing about Aulus Gellius.”

"All you do not know, Umbra, would make a very large book."

"I do not see what business you have to twit me with ignorance, Mr. X——," I answered, in a rage, "and I will not stand it from you. Just remember what an absurd figure you yourself cut when you tried to talk Latin to the clergyman at Reykholt. But what said Cato, the Censor?"

"Si quid est, quod utar, utor; si non est, egeo. that is, If I have a good thing I enjoy it; if I have it not, I go without it—that was sound philosophy. We have nothing to eat, so we cannot dine; I have still some tobacco, so I smoke it."

"I wish we had a fire, Mr. X——."

"I remember our Arabs used to light a fire in the desert, when the nights were cold, of the dry bushes. I think I can see it all now, as the flame would blaze up fitfully and throw its strong light on the lizard-like heads of the camels kneeling round our tent, and some wild palms. Ah! time goes by, Umbra—time goes by! 'Eheu fugaces,' Umbra."

"You have been a great traveller, Mr. X——."

"Yes; I have gained my experience."

"Do you think we shall get home safe?"

"We shall return, Umbra. Do you see that star? that is my star."

"What! do you believe in astrology?" said I, quite delighted to find such superstition in Mr. X—; but his answer disappointed me.

"Why, if you ask me seriously, I suppose I must say I have faith in Newton and Copernicus rather than Pineda and Nostradamus. I can scarcely suppose a world was created some hundred million years ago to influence the destiny of the atom that has the honour to address you. Still I have a sneaking weakness for that star. Do you know, Umbra, I once heard a very clever man who had been Prime Minister say that the cause of the second Mr. Pitt's failure in all his foreign enterprises was because he had no star; and in serio-comic vein he mooted the question

whether a Minister could be impeached for having no star."

"There is a capital story by Charles Bernard," said I, "of a woman who makes three admirers all select particular stars for their worship—she bamboozles them all! ha! ha! ha!"

"Umbra, I regret to perceive that there is a startling levity in your tone about women. I am afraid you have been perverted by Darwin and Digwell, instead of taking example from M'Diarmid, Lodbrog, and me. I know what Digwell meant about his basalt and ladies; it was a sneer at the sex, sir; and I myself heard Darwin eall that young lady at Hitterdal a goose, because she differed from him about some event in the Saga. No good can come of it—no good can come of it to them" [little did I then think how awfully this prophecy was shortly to be fulfilled with reference to Digwell and Darwin]. "No one may insult the sex with impunity. Were you ever at Rosslyn Chapel?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because over the Prentice Pillar are carved these words:

" ' Forte est vinum,  
Fortior est Rex,  
Fortiores sunt mulieres.' "

Remember that."

"How comes it, Mr. X——," said I, "if you have so great a veneration for ladies that you have never married?"

Mr. X—— seemed rather uneasy at this remark, and puffed hard at his pipe. At last he answered:

"If you wish to know the cause, Umbra, the true cause....."

"Yes."

"It is....."

"It is?"

"The Grand Junction Brentford Tramway and Sewer."

"Merciful heavens!" said I, "what do you mean?"

Mr. X—— refilled his pipe, lit it, and commenced what I must term the disgraceful confession of a Member of Parliament.

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## CHAPTER IX.

“ ‘*Vuoi ch' io rinnovelli disperato dolor.*’ Many years ago, before my hair turned gray, it was in 1828 or '29 I think—I know there was just beginning to be a talk about Railways and Reform in Parliament—I met at a country house a young lady, Leonora Blank. I remember the first time I saw her I stared at her as if she had been a spirit, with her pale face and dark hair and eyes. Yes, I may say of her in the words of the poet,

“ ‘She was beautiful—her beauty made  
The bright world dim, and everything beside  
Seem'd like the fleeting image of a shade.’

But why do I talk in this way to you, Umbra, who have no more poetry in your soul than there is in a Newfoundland codfish? For what are you but a sneering, scoffing spirit, a would-be sayer of good things, which you have not the wit yourself to fabricate, but which you pick up from Darwin and me and repeat as the mock-bird I have heard in the magnolia forests of South Carolina?”

I do not know whether I was more angry at the contemptuous insolence of Mr. X——, or amused at his vanity in supposing that he ever did say a good thing. The real fact was, I believe, he had been much put out by my reminding him of his breakdown in Latin at Reykholt, and not liking to pursue that subject paid me off in this way. So I only said

“ I have no doubt that Leonora was a faultless being.”

“ Was she?” replied Mr. X——, with emphasis;  
“ I conceived a violent antipathy against her.”

"You surprise me. Why so?"

"It has often puzzled myself; but I believe it is a question of metaphysics. I have read in a French author that towards those persons who are destined to exercise great influence over your future life the soul by anticipation contracts dislike, as if conscious of the coming tyranny."

"Well, it is a very odd idea. But proceed."

"I did nothing but study her faults. The way that girl used to snub her mother was what my American friends call a caution. At last I was so exasperated that one day I told her my opinion of her."

"With what effect?"

"I don't know what effect it had on her, but I know what it had on me. Sir, no river steamer, snagged and water-logged on the Mississippi, was ever reduced to a more helpless condition than the numskull who..... Well, no one can resist his fate! Of course Leonora soon found out the mischief she had done."

"Did she give you any encouragement?"

"I cannot honestly say she did, unless leading one the life of a dog can be called encouragement. One day I was giving my opinion on passing events, when she said I had better hold my tongue, as it was very ridiculous for any one who was not in Parliament to have any opinion about politics."

"That was going too far."

"Too far, do you say? too far? why such a sentiment strikes at the very root of our constitutional liberties. The Attorney-General might have been directed to prosecute for such a speech. However, I don't think Sir John Copley would have taken much by his motion if he had applied for a rule against Leonora. It was quite enough for me though—an election coming off in my part of the country. I stood, and after a hard fight came in. My opponent on the hustings said I was actuated by ill-judged

ambition; I wonder what he would have thought of Leonora's conduct!"

"It is rather an expensive amusement is it not, a contested election?"

"Very," replied Mr. X—— feelingly. "When I next met Leonora and told her of my success, she expressed scornful surprise that any one should go into what she called so stupid a place as the House of Commons. Contempt of the High Court of Parliament, sir!"

"I don't think you ever address the House, Mr. X——."

"Why, my dear Umbra, living with me so constantly as you have for the last five weeks you cannot have failed to discover that I am the most modest person living."

"Upon my word and honour, Mr. X——, I had not found it out."

"Well, such is the case, it is almost a defect in my charater; and notwithstanding my surpassing.... hem! I mean I never imagined that I should turn out a Mirabeau—my shyness is in the way. However, I thought being in I must speak sometimes. I remember the first time I was going to speak the House insisted on dividing before dinner. I would rather take a royal Bengal tiger by the beard than attempt to address the House of Commons impatient for dinner."

"Did you try?"

"Not I. The fellow who got up they groaned at for ten minutes till he sate down, and they would never let him speak since. The next time I prepared a speech it was several hours before I could catch the Speaker's eye, and there is nothing more trying to the courage than waiting, jumping up and having to sit down again a dozen times; however, at last I had my turn."

"And broke down, I suppose?"

"No, I did not; but no one seemed to pay the least attention—they went on talking, walking in

and out—and next morning my oration of forty minutes appeared in four lines in 'The Times'—just four lines."

"Halloa! halloa!" rang a strident voice behind us, as Darwin came up; "who is it that dares abuse 'The Times'?"

"Not I," said Mr. X——; "I am not so rash. I will say for 'The Times' that it always shows a generous zeal in coming to the aid of the strongest party, and that it never attacks any one unfairly—unless he is unsuccessful."

"And quite right too," said Darwin, "he ought to succeed: 'from him that hath not shall be taken that which he hath.'"

"Amen, so be it. You quote Scripture like a very learned clerk, Darwin. Now go, and leave Umbra and me to finish our talk."

Mr. X—— resumed: "The dreadful work I had that Session—now rushing to parties with the hope of catching a peep of Leonora—now hurrying to the House in an old hackney coach (cabs were not invented) to save a division. The absurdities I committed! why you would hardly believe it of me, Umbra, but I positively once went to a ball in Baker Street, hearing Leonora would be there."

"You surprise me," said I with covert irony.

"I knew I should. My idea of Purgatory is a hot London ball-room; I have not been in one for the last twelve years. We are better off here, Umbra, in the pure air smoking our pipes."

"Well," said I, my teeth chattering, "it is very cold here."

"It is cool; if it was not for the great worsted over-all stockings my aunt Rose worked me, I think I should be frozen—they have saved me. Mem., to take back aunt Rose an Iceland cap."

"But to go on with your story, Mr. X——."

"Ah! whenever I did see Leonora she was always surrounded by admirers; one of the most assiduous of these was a Sir Charles Clumsy."

" You hated him of course."

" No, I don't think I did. He was a great Yorkshire baronet, with red face and large hands, intensely good-natured, and a lineal descendant through the female line of Sir Tunbelly Clumsy. I think I rather pitied him. He was very rich and I had nothing—minus election expenses; but putting aside the adventitious circumstances of rank and fortune, I was, in all other respects, so immeasurably his superior, that any comparison between us seemed absurd."

" Modesty and merit both begin with M," said I.

" They do," replied Mr. X—, not noticing the application of my satirical remark. " Well, it was towards the end of the Session that I was put on a Committee of the Grand Junction Brentford Tramway and Sewer—a very important case it was, I assure you, Umbra. We fagged at it for three weeks and more. At last it was settled that on a certain day the Committee were to hear the concluding speeches of Counsel and make their Report. The night previous I met Leonora out in the world. I must tell you, she had one peculiarity: she never forgave any person who did not implicitly and unhesitatingly obey her commands however impracticable."

" That was not reasonable."

" Reason was not Leonora's forte; she exercised empire like Cæsar, Mahomet, Napoleon Bonaparte. That night I thought I had made more way in her favour than ever before. As we separated, she said, ' We are going to Hampton Court to-morrow; you may come—you will take care of mamma and me. Be ready at half-past twelve.' You may conceive my rapture—when at that moment the thought of the Grand Brentford Junction stung me like a serpent, and I faltered out some words about the Committee. ' Committee!' she said; ' stuff and nonsense!' (contempt of the High Court again, Umbra) ' you will do what I tell you. Be with us at half-past twelve, or.....' I knew what that ' or ' meant.



"Next day I went in a dreadful state of mind to the Committee room at eleven, and asked the Chairman to let me off the Committee. 'Quite impossible, Mr. X——,' said he; 'we have got to make our Report to-day. I should have to report *you* if you were absent.' A most worthy man was our Chairman, but at that moment I could have slain him for his ill-timed facetiousness, as I sank back despairing in my chair.

"I remember it all only too well. It was a small room crowded with lawyers and others, and against the wall hung a map showing a network of roads, tramroads, and sewers round Brentford, like those anatomical drawings of the human frame you see in the shop windows. I think my fixed attention on this map struck people. I was guessing what exact spot in it Hampton Court Gardens would occupy; and then the lawyers began. How grateful we ought all to be that we are not the wielders of absolute power; for I tried to find some solace in the thoughts of all the torments I would have heaped on those lawyers had it been in my power. I ran them rapidly over in my mind: the tortures inflicted by Dionysius of Syracuse; by Tiberius at Capua; by Diocletian on the early Christians; by Ezzelino, tyrant of Padua; the fate of Ugolino in the Torre di Fame; the practices of the Inquisition, the rack, the thumbscrew, and the water-trial; the pains inflicted on the Scotch Covenanters; and

" 'Luke's iron crown and Damien's bed of steel.'

By the way, Luke is a mistake of Goldsmith's; it ought to be Zach, he was a Bohemian.

"Did you remember the account of the sufferings endured by Ensign Murphy and Lieutenant Lismahago at the hands of the Red Indians, as recorded in 'Humphrey Clinker'?"

"I did not forget them, you may be sure. There was one long-winded lawyer with a droning voice, that grated on the ear like a saw. For him I

reserved the punishment proposed by Autolyeus for the son of the elown: 'To be flayed alive; then 'nointed over with honey set on the head of a wasps' nest; then stand till he be three quarters and a dram dead; then reeovered again with aqua vitæ or some other hot infusion; then, raw as he is, and in the hottest day prognostication proclaims, shall be set against a briek wall, the sun looking with a southward eye upon him.' Are you aware, Umbra, that Shakespeare took that idea from Boecaeio? You will find it, as well as the whole plot of another play, 'Cymbeline,' if you will turn to the 'Decamerone,' second day—novella nine."

"I think, Mr. X——, I might find some difficulty in finding an edition of Boecaeio at the Hval Fiordh."

"You are right. But if this droning lawyer irritated me, his antagonist exasperated me still more. He was a fat, oily man, with a merry, twinkling eye, and was a joker of jokes. I was thinking how he would bellow if he were placed in the brazen bull of Phalaris, and this idea caused me to smile a languid smile. The deluded man thought I was laughing at one of his Anskoter jokes, as we should say here, and he redoubled his attention to me. I hated him more than ever, and piled up imaginary tortures. I remembered how a fellow-pupil of mine at College had wished to have his tutor, Jacob—who had set him a long imposition—placed in the erevasse of a glacier and there fed with salt meat; but I dismissed this as too easy, seeing he would have an abundant supply of good water. At last I recalled with satisfaction the habits of the Dey of Algiers, who threw the Jews who displeased him—that is, who did not lend him money—over a wall, which he thought an amusing game; if lucky, they were only killed or maimed, but if unlucky they were caught by hooks on the other side and hung there till they expired."

"Good heavens, Mr. X——!" said I; "am I talking to a monster?"

"Not to a monster, my dear Umbra—not to a wilfully cruel man—not even to an ill-natured man—only to one who wanted to be with Leonora at Hampton Court instead of being tied to the stake at Westminster. I am now an intimate friend of both the gentlemen—the one I wished to flay, and the other I would have pitched over the wall.

"Nothing can last for ever, and even the lawyers' speeches came to an end. We were to consider our Report. The rest of the Committee were divided two and two, and after much argument they all turned to me, with whom the decision practically rested. Of course I had not attended to a word during the agony I was in."

"And what did you do?"

"I thought it safe to vote with the Chairman, which I did, and our decision is appealed to as a monument of judicial wisdom to this day. I then rode as fast as a horse could carry me to Hampton Court, and arrived there, powdered with dust, at the old Toy Inn, where our party was to dine. The first person I saw was Sophy Bellasis, a cousin of Leonora's—a very nice girl she was. She went into a fit of laughing when she saw me—I was white as a miller.

"'What a figure you are!' said she. 'You had better go and dress, dinner is just ready. And do you know, an event has happened; it is no use keeping it a secret—Sir Charles Clumsy has proposed to Leonora in the gardens this afternoon, and has been accepted!'"

"Pleasant! What did you do?"

"I rode back to town, and next day was at Liverpool and sailed to America."

"And Leonora?"

"Lady Clumsy is very happy, I hope. When I came back from America I met her, and she said to me, 'So you would not come to Hampton Court?' I thought it no good to begin about the Grand Brentford Junction and my ride in the dust, and she

passed on very stately. She has several children now, and is grown very stout. My pipe is out; it is time for us to turn in."

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## CHAPTER X.

IN the middle of the night I awoke, and heard a monotonous kind of chant going on. It was Darwin, who, kept awake by hunger, was repeating to himself some lines in Runic rhythm. I say rhythm, for rhyme there seemed none, only alliteration. I have since made diligent search for this Skaldic curiosity, but have not been fortunate enough to find it anywhere.

"Baldur, the beauteous,  
Is borne on his bier,  
Baldur, the blameless,  
Bale strikes the best !  
To the silent sea-shore,  
To the sad sable ship,  
Carry him comely,  
Carry the corse,  
With his horse and his harness  
To Hela to ride !

"Grief-stricken came Giants,  
Grief-stricken came gods,  
Their sov'reign and sire  
Sighs o'er his slain son :  
Draupnir's gold ringlet  
He drops on the dead.  
Mourns Thor on Mjøl'nir,  
His mallet of might.  
Fair Fulla—fond Freya,  
Came with cats to her car.  
Nanna, Nep's daughter,  
The Nastrond draws nigh,  
Lonely life loathing,  
She lies by her lord.

"Flash fires fast-spreading !  
Flare funeral flames !

The corse and the charger  
Consume with the ship !

“ Haste, Hermod, to Hela !  
Hie, Hermod, to Hel !  
On Sleipnir swift-footed,  
Spring Odin’s swift son !  
Nine days, and nine nights,  
Niflheim must thread,  
Till thou gainest Gjöll River  
And gold-glistening bridge ;  
Bestow bribes on Hela  
To bring Baldur back.

“ Lament all things living,  
Things lifeless, the loved—  
Wail men, and wail women,  
Weep rocks, and weep woods !  
Nature’s kind nurslings,  
Bonny birds, forest flowers,  
Weep, weep, as ye warble,  
As ye bud winsome, weep !  
So Death may our darling  
To daylight restore !  
Ah ! ’Thaukt the hag thankless  
Tears’ tribute denies !”

Here there was a pause for a time.

“ Any one awake there ?” said Darwin.

No answer.

“ Ah !” said he, “ this is rough work. I should not like to confess it before the others, but I almost wish myself back in Printing House Square. Let me see—how do the Runes proceed ?

“ Fenrir ferocious,  
Fierce fiend, dost thou howl ?  
Champing the chain which  
Cunning dwarfs forged.  
From frightful jaws flowing  
The foam forms the Vohn,  
Rushing, a river,  
Until Ragnarok.  
“ Woe, woe, to the Æsir,  
When the Wolf wages war !

Bifrost, bridge brightest,  
Broken will be !  
Sun, stars, will he swallow.....”

Here, I regret to say, I fell fast asleep, and I cannot state what further prodigies are to ensue when Ragnarok—which I understand to mean the twilight of the gods—occurs.

## CHAPTER XI.

“Night’s candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops,”

was the first thing I heard next morning, as Mr. X——, giving himself a shake like a Newfoundland dog, crawled out of the tent.

“Now, Umbra, get up! Look alive!”

The morning was so cold that I had the greatest difficulty in washing at a neighbouring brook, for my fingers were too numbed to hold my sponge.

While I was thus employed, came Mr. X——, and taking his position higher up—on the principle of the Wolf and the Lamb—and seeing me look very uncomfortable, addressed me:

“What, think’st  
That the bleak air, thy boist’rous chamberlain,  
Will put thy shirt on warm?”

I will not proceed in the quotation, for we have no moist trees that have outlived the eagle hereabout; nor would it be appropriate to say,

“Will the cold brook,  
Candied with ice, caudle thy morning taste,  
To cure thy o’er night’s surfeit?”

for you certainly had not a surfeit of food last night. Poor Digwell is very bad; that ancient fish-like smell quite upset him. Too bad of M’Diarmid,

playing such a joke! Now for a plunge. Ugh! ugh! ugh! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" The cold water cure stopped *his* mouth for a time.

When we returned we found Digwell just awake.

"Oh, I have had such a dream!" he said, "such a delightful dream! why did I ever wake? I dreamed that I had been riding all day, when I came to a town, and found I was in Trumpington Street, Cambridge; so I rode right up to my College, in at the door, and over the grass plat—which is not allowed—and I left my horse at the foot of the staircase, and ran up to the Hall; and it was Gaudy-day, and they all got up to receive me, and shouted,

"‘Digwell is come again! adventurous Digwell!  
Greet him, kind friends, he has returned from Iceland!’"

And then I thought the Founder stepped from his picture in full canonicals, and said to me, 'Well done, thou hardy traveller!' and he asked me if Thor had many worshippers left in Iceland; and I said, 'Only uncle.' And then he said, 'Let me not detain you, Mr. Digwell, you must be hungry after your ride;' and he took me up to the Dais, and there, on the table, was a baron of beef, and turkey, and chine, and a boar's head in the centre; and—oh, Umbra! oh, Mr. X——!—a little roast sucking-pig with a lemon in his mouth!" A tear stood in Digwell's eye.

I saw my friend was overcome, and respected his emotion, till he asked,

"Anything for breakfast to-day, Umbra?"

"Tea, Digwell, excellent tea, and milk."

"No solids? I don't suppose M'Diarmid would let us kill a horse, would he?"

"What! lætum equino sanguine *Concanum*?" said Mr. X——. "No, that would not do."

"Cheer up, Digwell, there will be plenty of beef at Reykjavik."

"I shall never see Reykjavik; I shall never get so

far! I shall never see dear old Cambridge again—many a good dinner I have had there!”

“*Sternitur et moriens dulces reminiscitur Argos*,” aside from Mr. X——.

“And, Umbra,” pursued Digwell, “I leave you to look over my papers. If you think the public would appreciate any of my poems or scientific observations, I don’t grudge the public having them. One scientific fact I have fully ascertained. It is always said Nature abhors a vacuum. Nature and I are quite one on that head.”

“Why, Digwell, you are growing jocose!”

“Ay; Sir Thomas More jested on the scaffold. I suppose Henry VIII., tyrant though he was, gave him some breakfast in the Tower before he started.”

Sound your horn, Regner! sound it loud! We shall all be in the doldrums! Pack the tent; start the cavalcade! Eastwards ho! forwards! march!

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## CHAPTER XII.

WE pursued our road for some time by the much-sounding sea. I recall with mournful regret all the incidents of this day. I overheard Darwin talking to Mr. X—— on some of the subjects of his nocturnal song.

“The All-Father,” said he, “cast Hela into Niflheim, and gave her nine worlds, into which she distributes all who die not in battle. She answers to the southern Proserpine, and from her comes our word for a place of punishment. Listen to the account of her habitation given in the Edda. Her hall is called Elvidnir; Hunger is her table; Starvation her knife; Delay her man; Slowness her maid; Precipice her threshold; Care her bed; and burning Anguish forms the hangings of her apartments. Now this is not altogether unlike the des-



cription given of the Infernal Regions by Virgil. Do you remember the passage?"

"I do," said Mr. X——, and he repeated with great satisfaction :

" Vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci  
Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curæ ;  
Pallentesque habitant morbi, tristisque Senectus,  
Et Metus, et malesuada Fames, ac turpis Egestas ;  
Terribiles visu formæ ; Letumque, Labosque ;  
Tum consanguineus Leti Sopor ; et mala mentis  
Gaudia ; mortiferumque adverso in limine Bellum,  
Ferreique Eumenidum thalami, et Discordia demens,  
Vipereum crinem vittis innexa cruentis."

At the close of this day's ride, we surmounted a pass, and again saw stretched before us the open sea, and the plain near Reykjavik, surrounded by hills, peak beyond peak, the same view which I mentioned in the opening lines of this journal. I know no greater pleasure than gaining the top of a high pass, and looking down on a wide country below. I then feel like a conqueror! and it is a very innocent pleasure, to obtain which it is not necessary to put many thousand people out of this excellent world, and to mutilate double that number. Mossfell, which was to be our last encampment, lay beneath us, and now I approach reluctantly the dread catastrophe.

Mine was the fault—mine, mine! Why did I insult Darwin's cherished prejudices? Had I not heard him once declare that the man who contemned the Edda deserved the doom of the Spread Eagle? and when I inquired the meaning of that mystic phrase, had he not answered: " Our heroic ancestors, when they received a mortal affront, would conquer their enemy, and suspend him living to a gibbet. Then, by a dagger, dexterously dividing the ribs and forcing them outwards, they made the mocker assume a happy resemblance to a spread eagle." I ventured to doubt whether such a proceeding was exactly in accordance with the doctrine of the New

Testament, but Darwin had looked so fierce that I had not dared say more.

Our present dispute began in this wise, as we rode on amicably together.

"Umbra," said Darwin, "this is the last day but one of our journey. Now confess that you have never before in your life seen scenery so worthy of admiration as this glorious Iceland."

Now, in my heart, I did admire Iceland exceedingly. I had admired it all from the first glimpse I had caught from the sea of the Múrdalr Glacier, bristling with pinnacles of ice, like gigantic bayonets, even until now; but I think that horrid cold wind in the morning, which had chilled my very marrow while at my toilette by the brook, must have made me contradictory, for I replied:

"What! a country where not a tree can grow! all lava, rock, ice, and bog! Better I love to repose where Lake Benacus nestles amid lemon gardens, or where the blue ripple of the sunny *Ægæan* kisses islands odorous with myrtle and *cistus*."

Darwin curled his lip in scorn.

"If," said he, "you cannot appreciate the sterner and sublimer beauties of Nature, you might at least feel the force of their historic associations; dead, indeed, must he be to all the higher sensations of the intellect, who can tread without a thrill a spot consecrated by valour and poesy."

"I am not so insensible as you imagine," replied I, getting on my own particular hobby, and waxing, I own, absurdly grandiloquent. "Not undelighted have I watched the dawn break on the roseate temple of Petra, or seen the declining sun change the marble pillars of the Parthenon into columns of burnished gold. Not without emotion did I gallop my horse over the plain of Marathon, or smoke my chibouque by that lion-crowned Portal, where ascended the King of men, returning from Troy, in short-lived triumph, when the shrieks of the doomed

Cassandra were soon to echo through the Palace of Mycenæ."

"What!" said he, "you simulate an enthusiasm for such reminiscences, and cannot recognise the merit of a higher order of literature! For what are Cassandra and Electra to Sangrida and Helda? what was Homer himself, compared with the divine Snorro?"

"Snorro!" I repeated, in surprise, "who on earth was Snorro?"

"Ignorant, soulless being! Are not these things written in the Saga?"

"The Saga, Mr. Darwin?" said I. "I believe the Saga to be a humbug!"

Scarcely had I let this imprudent word escape, than the Herculean frame of my friend was convulsed with passion. His eye glared with fury. Grasping the hammer of Mr. Digwell, which he chanced to have borrowed, he, with one blow, felled me from my horse. "Die, blasphemer, die!" shouted he, frantic with rage: and I have no doubt he was about to finish my existence, when the earth shook beneath us. A mightier power than "The Times" was abroad. A long-extinct volcano, resuming activity, suddenly woke to life. With horrid roar, with hideous belch, a column of mingled fire and smoke arose, and an enormous rocky mass, ninety tons in weight, upheaved three kilometres in air, descending, crushed Mr. Darwin and his horse flat as a pancake.

I had read the "Last Days of Pompeii," so I knew the proper remark to make:—"The earth has preserved her child!" and then, with the pain of the blow I had received, I swooned away.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I recovered, soft and tender eyes were beaming on me. It was the Lady of Hitterdal, who, passing with her train, dismounted, to assist the wounded traveller.

\* \* \* \* \*

My poor friend Darwin, whom I freely forgave for his impetuosity, had a noble tablet to his memory, in the immense block beneath which he had been crushed. There he lies, buried like a Norse warrior of old with his horse; dying in harness, with battle-axe (that is Digwell's hammer) in hand.

We caused to be engraved on the rock this epigraph, which, whatever may be its poetic pretensions, has at least the merit of being strictly original:—

“What needs my Darwin for his honoured bones,  
The labour of an age in piled stones?  
He, to our wonder and astonishment,  
Was hid beneath a grander monument,  
And in such pomp doth here sepulchred lie,  
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.”

Around this we carved a Runic ornament, the pattern of which the talented Swedish sculptor has copied (I regret to say without acknowledgment) on the pedestal of his spirited group, “The Grapplers,” exhibited in the last International Exhibition.

Often does the Iceland peasant, as he passes the spot, heave a sigh when he recalls the fate of him who handed down to lasting record the traditions of the Scandinavian race. Often will the British traveller check his horse's rein to pause and contemplate the self-raised monument, beneath which rests all that is mortal of the brave, the learned, the enthusiastic, ay, and in despite of all his hastiness, the virtuous Darwin.

Darwin's was not the only loss we had to deplore. Digwell had been some time wasting away, and at Mossfell sunk from inanition, almost in sight of port—of plenty awaiting him. We gave him whatever of sustenance was left, but he shook his head over the soup-can, and pronounced three times, in solemn accent, “Watery, watery, watery!” He then bequeathed his military saddle, that relic of Marlborough's wars, to the British Museum. (For a long

time it remained in the room west of the Megatherium, but I hear there has lately been some talk of moving it to Kensington.) After this his speech was somewhat incoherent. We caught some broken words "That a beefsteak should be dressed with oyster-sauce." A better or more pure-hearted man never existed. We composed for him an epitaph. I do not like it as much as the other. I cannot help suspecting that I have seen something like the two last lines elsewhere :—

"Here gentle Digwell lies—a youthful sage,  
To science true, as magnet to the pole ;  
But hunger did repress the noble rage,  
Fell famine froze the current of his soul."

Neither did Lord Lodbrog return to England. Whether it was that he feared to face the six ladies without bringing them the plumage of the great auk, I cannot say, but he stopped and married the Island Princess, the Lady of Hitterdal. From the romantic circumstances of our meeting, when she brought me succour, it might have been expected that I should have been the favoured one, but it was not so. To my great disgust, she always talked of me as the "poor old gentleman," and she smiled on Regner Lodbrog. She brought him, as a marriage portion, four hundred ponies, eight hundred cows, and six thousand sheep; and her trousseau was composed of 1,900 blue fox skins. They have since lived very happily. Lodbrog built a fine summer palace near Skapta Jokul, where he exercises unbounded hospitality to all tourists who visit him. Only travellers are requested to bring their own biscuits, bread being very scarce in Iceland.

Our party was thus reduced to half, by death and marriage. The remainder sailed to England, stopping at the Faroë Islands, which are very curious, but I have not the heart now to describe them.

M'Diarmid flourishes, but is grown rather stout for a Spartan. I used to look at the Parliamentary

debates in the papers, thinking that Mr. X—— might bring the affairs of Iceland under the consideration of the House, but I have long given up that expectation. To be sure there is nothing to be said about them. He, M'Diarmid, and I, sometimes meet at our Club, dine together, and talk over our tour "die frohe tage" of our prime.

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## APPENDIX.

THE following verses were found among Mr. Digwell's papers, and clearly had reference to a large wooden stoup, or covered bowl, which he had bought on the journey. We took it to England and forwarded it to the gentleman to whom the lines were addressed. For a long time we had the greatest difficulty in discovering where Mr. Edward Evans, of Loch Garry, resided. No one knew of such a person, or place, and we began to think Loch Garry must be what Darwin used to call, "East o' the sun, and west o' the moon." At length an advertisement in "The Times" produced the desired information.

I can only express my regret that in this posthumous publication Mr. Digwell should seem to have made slighting mention of the "ladies." I am also grieved to hear, that, in defiance of the express prohibition contained in his poem, Mrs. Evans converted his gift into a work-box for her own use. Mr. Evans confidentially informed me that he had several times remonstrated with Mrs. Evans on this subject, saying she was acting contrary to the private wishes of his departed friend, but that her only response was, "Private fiddlesticks!"

When I repeated this to Mr. X—— and M'Diarmid, Mr. X—— shrugged his shoulders and said, "Poor Digwell! 'Homme propose, mais femme dispose!'" and M'Diarmid added,

“ ‘Smeas so n’an t alum,’—this is worse than the alum!” the meaning of which observation I do not in the least comprehend.

“ From Thulë the hoary  
From Thulë the far,  
The Isle that reposes  
Beneath the North star.

“ Where Jokuls snow-mantled,  
Right lofty aspire,  
Where the ground underneath  
Is cavern’d by fire ;

“ Where founts of hot water  
In tall columns rise,  
And clouds of white vapour  
Ascend to the skies.

“ Where rocks of burnt lava  
Scarlet colouring take,  
As the braes red with heather  
By your own mountain lake.

“ Where corn may not ripen,  
Where tree may not grow,  
But through greenest meadows  
Where broad rivers flow

“ To the Fiordhs environ’d  
By desolate hills,  
Whose hollow the Ocean  
With throbbing pulse fills.

“ From regions scarce knowing  
The presence of man,  
Where preys the sea-eagle,  
Where floats the wild swan ;

“ From the shores of gray Iceland,  
Edward Evans, my friend,  
For your room at Loch Garry  
A present I send.

“ ’Tis not for the ladies,  
Their worsted and silk—  
To cool your warm porridge  
’Tis meant to hold milk.

" Your lip, Edward Evans,  
Now curl not in scorn,  
Let it show on your table  
At breakfast each morn.

" In American forest  
Grew its parent—a tree  
Which the foul Mississippi  
Roll'd down to the sea.

" In Mexico's gulf  
Long time did it tarry,  
But the Gulf-stream at length  
Did northwards it carry.

" It was borne on the surge  
Of the yeasty Atlantic,  
And the plaything became  
Of the hurricane frantic.

" It drifted—it drifted—  
Full many a day,  
Till at last it was stranded  
In Reykjavik's bay.

" Neath the dark Akraness  
Spied a peasant with pleasure,  
The waif of the Ocean—  
A surf-beaten treasure.

" This bowl did he fashion,  
And his hand with skill plastic  
Carved a Runic device  
Of a pattern fantastic.

" In the long nights of winter  
He finish'd his task.  
Edward Evans, I send it—  
Oh, cherish the Ask !"

THE END.











Lbs - Hbs / Watsonsfn



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